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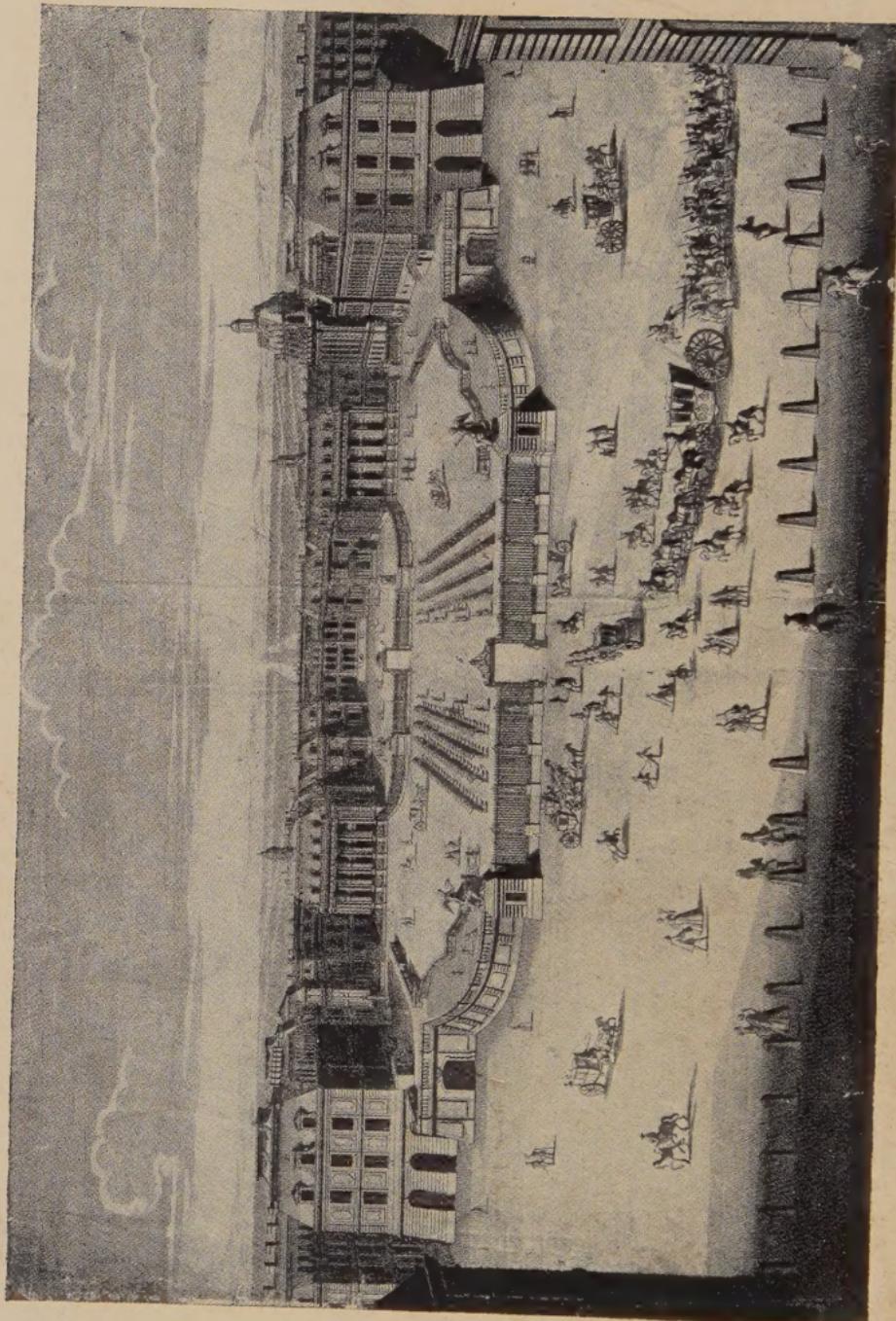
# VERSAILLES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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ROYAL CASTLE OF VERSAILLES

# VERSAILLES

## ITS LIFE AND HISTORY

BY

CECILIA HILL  
OFFICIER D'ACADEMIE

"A toutes les gloires de la France"

S.B.32395



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TO  
MY SISTER





## PREFACE

IT is difficult to say anything new about Versailles. All that can be recorded of its building and its art has been done in scholarly, enthusiastic, admirable fashion, as for a sacred trust, by French writers, notably by Monsieur de Nolhac who has exhausted every source. To him I must express my thanks not only for his books but for personal help and encouragement ; as also to Monsieur Pichard du Page who placed at my disposal all I asked for and all that he thought helpful in the Bibliothèque de la Ville. But my thanks are chiefly due to Monsieur Mauricheau-Beaupré, Conservateur of Trianon, who has also written much on Versailles and whose official lectures on its art and history should take Englishmen across the Channel every Monday ! For his inspiration, for the facilities he offered me in Versailles and Trianon, for his constant courtesy and generosity towards me, a late comer into the field, I am deeply and happily grateful.

But all those writers, and the many poets who have sung Versailles, are French, and they write for French readers ; whereas this short survey of mine is an attempt to see Versailles through English eyes ; to recognise it as the complete expression of a national spirit essentially different from our own and for that reason fascinating and necessary to our civilisation. The more so since our study of the classics is diminished. It is the more valuable for an Anglo-Saxon to possess within seven hours of London a monument as elegant and noble as an ode of Horace, as great and

restrained and proportioned as a Greek play. And yet French:—as fully and vividly and perpetually French as the river Seine, or the Bourgeois Gentilhomme, or a novel by Anatole France.

Versailles—by which is always meant the gardens too—was finished at the same time as Saint Paul's. Wren had been to Paris. He knew Charles Perrault and François Mansart, and must have met Le Nôtre. He understood their spirit. France and England thought and worked close together at that time. And we to-day, who have far closer ties, who fought as brothers side by side and yet when war is over find in the nature of the French things we cannot understand, will understand them better the more we know Versailles—with its story of a past that they inherit, and all its beauty that they love.

If this very simple book sends one English reader to spend leisureed, satisfying hours steeped in beauty, near the Parterre d'Eau, or in Mansart's Orangerie, or down Le Nôtre's long perspective I shall be glad, it is for him I wrote it. I think he will love England none the less because he knows and loves and honours France. Versailles is France.

CECILIA HILL.

BITTACY COTTAGE,  
MILL HILL.



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## CONTENTS

### VERSAILLES UNDER LOUIS XIV

#### CHAPTER I

##### INTRODUCTORY

The *Arrival*—Spain and Austria at the gateway—The *Ailes des Ministres*—*Pavilion Gabriel*—*Pavilion Dufour*—*Statue of Louis XIV*—The *Cour Royale*—The *Cour de Marbre*—The first Versailles, the red brick *Château of Louis XIII*—Love of building under Richelieu and Louis XIV, Perrault, François Mansart, Inigo Jones, Wren, Le Vau, J. Hardouin-Mansart—*Vaux-le-Vicomte*—Classic influence—The king refuses to pull down his father's château—Louise de la Valliere—Le Vau builds the second Versailles, the “enveloppe”—Life in the *Cour de Marbre*—*The classic façade on the gardens*—Its length and austerity—Its unity—Versailles the most complete expression of the French spirit—A comparison . page

i

#### CHAPTER II

##### L'APPARTEMENT DU ROI

Efforts of Louis XIV and Colbert to bring art back to France—The Académie Française at Rome—The Gobelins—Versailles as incentive to national effort—*Lower Vestibule de la Chapelle*—*Upper Vestibule*—*Salon d'Hercule* completed under Louis XV—Its ceiling by Le Moyne—Its festivities—*Salon d'Abondance*—The king as collector—Van der Meulen—*Salon de Venus*—*Salon de Diane*—*Salon de Mars*—*Salon de Mercure*—*Salon d'Apollon*—Italian influence—Marbles, stucco, metal, wood carvings, tapestries. The art is decorative—Stage scenery—Versailles Palace is propaganda for France—The life in these rooms the best of the king's reign—Contemporary opinion of them—Mademoiselle de Scudery—Madame de Sévigné .

18

## CHAPTER III

## THE GALERIE DES GLACES

Gentlemen, the King!—The *Salon de la Guerre*—A prelude to the Galerie des Glaces—Work of Mansart and of Lebrun—The great stucco relief by Coysevox—The *Galerie des Glaces*—Its purpose—Its models in Italy and Paris—Charles Lebrun as decorative artist—The mirrors—The “Chutes d’Armes”—The ceiling—The epic of the King—Nature of Louis XIV—His work for France—His wars, diplomacy, building and reforms—Chief historical events in the Galerie des Glaces down to the Peace Treaty in 1919—The *Salon de la Paix*—Le Moyne’s picture of Louis XV—France victorious and at peace . . . . page 36

## CHAPTER IV

## THE WORKROOMS AND THE CHAPEL

*Œil de Bœuf*—Transition towards eighteenth century—The famous frieze—Purposes of the room—*Anti-chambre du Roi*—The *Salle des Gardes du Roi*—The *Chambre de Louis XIV*—The centre of Versailles and of France and the monarchy—The Lever—The Coucher—Death of the Roi Soleil—The *Salon du Conseil*—Its wood carvings—Its uses—The King of Spain acknowledged—Madame du Barri is presented—*The Chapel*—Last work of Mansart—The king’s tribune—The ceiling—The pillars—The chapel the most French thing in Versailles . . . . 54

## CHAPTER V

## L'APPARTEMENT DE LA REINE

The Gilded Cage—The *Escalier de Marbre*—Rooms of *Madame de Maintenon*—Their life—The portraits of contemporary people—*Salle des Gardes de la Reine*—Its marbles—Curious ceiling—*Anti-Chambre de la Reine*—Its tapestries—*Salon des Nobles*—The queens of France—Marie Antoinette—The *Chambre de la Reine*—October 6th, 1789 72

## CHAPTER VI

## THE GARDENS AS LANDSCAPE

Genius of Andre Le Nôtre—Nobility of his style—Grandeur of scheme only judged fully from roof of palace—Use of sky, land and water—*The great perspective to the West*—

The <i>Grand Terrace</i> — <i>Vases de la Paix</i> and <i>de la Guerre</i> — The <i>Parterre d'Eau</i> —Saint Simon's criticisms— <i>The Rivers of France</i> —The <i>Cabinet de Diane</i> —The <i>Parterre du Nord</i> — <i>The Allée d'Eau</i> — <i>The Bassin du Dragon</i> and the <i>Bassin de Neptune</i> — <i>Ballin's Vases</i> —The <i>Parterre du Midi</i> — <i>The Lac des Suisses</i> —Mansart's <i>Orangerie</i> —How it accentuates the unity of Versailles . . . . .	page	91
--	------	----

## CHAPTER VII

## THE FOUNTAINS

The <i>Cité des Eaux</i> —Schemes and attempts to obtain water— The Fountain of <i>Latona</i> —Necessity of water to see full beauty and significance of fountain basins and adjacent statues— <i>The Vases of Versailles</i> — <i>The Tapis Vert</i> — <i>The Bassin d'Apollon</i> — <i>Plaisirs des Iles Enchantés</i> — <i>The Grand Canal</i> —Its fleet— <i>La Petite Venise</i> —The left arm towards the Menagerie—The Right towards Trianon . . . . .	107
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

## LES BOSQUETS

<i>La Vie Delicieuse</i> —The symmetry of their arrangement—The nature and uses of bosquets— <i>The Rond Vert</i> — <i>The Ile des Enfants</i> — <i>The Etoile</i> — <i>The Encelade</i> — <i>Bosquet des Domes</i> — <i>Bassin de Flore</i> — <i>Bassin de Ceres</i> — <i>Bosquet des Bains d'Apollon</i> — <i>Bassin de Bacchus</i> — <i>Salle de Bal</i> — <i>Bosquet de la Reine</i> — <i>Fontaine de Saturne</i> — <i>Bassin du Miroir</i> — <i>Jardin du Roi</i> — <i>Salle des Maronniers</i> — <i>La Colonnade</i> —Scenes of later days—Importance of Versailles' gardens to France and to the world—Complete expression of French spirit as compared with the <i>Jardin Anglais</i> . . . . .	120
---	-----

## CHAPTER IX

## LE GRAND TRIANON

The <i>Trianon de Marbre</i> —Its marbles—Its romantic style—Built among flowers—Its place in French art— <i>Salon des Glaces</i> — <i>The Chambre</i> — <i>Salon de la Chapelle</i> — <i>Salle des Princes</i> — <i>Peristyle</i> — <i>Salle des Colonnes</i> — <i>Salon de Musique</i> — <i>Grand Salon</i> — <i>Cabinet du Couchant</i> — <i>Salon Frais</i> — <i>Grande Galerie</i> and <i>Cotelle's</i> paintings of the Bosquets— <i>Salon des Jardins</i> — <i>Salon des Sources</i> —Rooms occupied by <i>Napoleon</i> — <i>Bedroom of Queen Victoria</i> —The garden—Its perfume—The <i>Duchesse de Bourgogne</i> —A fête in 1697— <i>Trianon under Louis XV</i> — <i>Claude Richard</i> . . . . .	134
---	-----

THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH  
CENTURIES

CHAPTER X

THE ROOMS OF LOUIS XV

Versailles in twilight—Peter the Great—Change of spirit in France—Change of attitude towards monarchy—Character of Louis XV—Eighteenth-century art as reaction from stateliness to intimacy—*The Chambre of Louis XV*—Its carvings and tapestries—Death of Louis XV—*Cabinet de Garde Robe* with exquisite wood carvings—*Salon de la Pendule*—*Antichambre des Chiens*—*Salle à Manger*—Madame de Pompadour—Her life and influence—Her theatre—Her rooms—The *Escalier des Chiens*—Rooms of Madame du Barri—Life in boudoirs—The *Cabinet d'Angle*—The *Arrière Cabinet*—The *Salon de Musique*—Mozart—*Bibliothèque de Louis XVI*—*Salon des Porcelaines* . page

149

CHAPTER XI

THE ROOMS OF THE DAUPHIN AND OF MESDAMES

Portraits of royal family and contemporary people by Rigaud and Van Loo and Nattier and others . . . . .

169

CHAPTER XII

THE OPERA AND THE ROOMS OF MARIE ANTOINETTE

Last Gleams—Jacques Ange Gabriel and the “Grand Projet”—The Opera—Work of Pajou—The Banquet to the Guards—The *Cabinets de la Reine*—Marie Antoinette's life there—Their place in art—Transition to Directoire style—The *Méridienne*—The *Bibliothèque*—The *Salon* .

179

CHAPTER XIII

LE PETIT TRIANON

Built for La Pompadour and for botany—Its exterior—Their pictures—The carvings of Guibert—Difficulties of Marie Antoinette at Versailles—Desire to escape—Her character

# CONTENTS

xiii

—Her friends— <i>Gardening in the eighteenth century</i> —Rousseau and the Elysée of his Julie—The <i>Jardin Anglais</i> as reaction against symmetry of Le Nôtre—The plan of the Duc de Caraman—Work of Richard, and Mique—The <i>Temple de l'Amour</i> —The <i>Petit Lac</i> —The <i>Grotto</i> —Public feeling excited against expenses of Trianon—The queen's kindness of heart and ignorance—She gives cause for scandal—Her innocence—Love for Fersen—The <i>Theatre</i> —Work of Mique—The plays—The company—The <i>Hameau</i> —The last day. . . . .	page 189
CHAPTER XIV	
LE MUSÉE HISTORIQUE	
<i>Versailles under Napoleon and the Restoration</i> —Schemes for its use—Louis Philippe turns it into an Historical Museum—New interest in history in 1838—Sources searched—A school of patriotism—Appealing to all political parties— <i>Chronological Guide</i> —Points of interest in the town of Versailles, the churches of Saint Louis and of Notre Dame, the <i>Bibliothèque de la Ville</i> ; the Ecuries, Salle du Jeu de Paume, the Potager— <i>École Militaire de Saint Cyr</i> — <i>Galerie de Pierre</i> — <i>Salle des Croisades</i> —The Romantics— <i>Attique du Nord</i> —Genuine old portraits— <i>Salle de l'Histoire de France</i> —Salles de Madame de Maintenon—Salles du Dixhuitième Siècle—The <i>Gouaches</i> of Van Blarenbergh—Salle des Etats Généraux—Salle de 1792— <i>Galerie des Batailles</i> —Military painting through the centuries—Prominence given to Napoleon—His career through the rooms—His death—Salle du Congrès—Salles de l'Histoire Contemporaine—Vernet and the Campaign of Algeria—The Crimea—Italy— <i>The War of 1870</i> — <i>Reichshoffen</i> — <i>Champigny</i> — <i>Patrie</i> . . . . .	212
<b>INDEX</b> . . . . .	237



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
ROYAL CASTLE OF VERSAILLES . . . . .	}
(From an Engraving, circa 1730)	16
CENTRAL FAÇADE OF VERSAILLES. TOWARDS THE GARDENS	}
THE FOUNTAIN OF LATONA . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by <i>Les Archives Photographiques d'Art et d'Histoire</i> )	38
LOUIS XIV. STUCCO BY COYSEVOX IN THE SALON DE LA GUERRE . . . . .	48
GALERIE DES GLACES . . . . .	56
SALON DE L'ŒIL-DE-BŒUF . . . . .	96
BRONZES OF THE PARTERRE D'EAU—GROUP OF CHILDREN . . . . .	}
THE DORDOGNE . . . . .	}
VASE DE LA GUERRE . . . . .	112
VASE DU SOLEIL . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by <i>Les Archives Photographiques d'Art et d'Histoire</i> )	128
LA COLONNADE . . . . .	174
MADAME LOUISE. BY NATTIER . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by Levy & Neurdein)	188
LOUIS XV. BY CARL VAN LOO . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by Levy & Neurdein)	190
SALON DE MARIE ANTOINETTE . . . . .	204
GRAND TRIANON . . . . .	}
PETIT TRIANON . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by Levy & Neurdein)	204
LOUIS XVI. BY DUPLESSIS . . . . .	}
MARIE ANTOINETTE. BY CALLET . . . . .	}
(From a Photograph by Levy & Neurdein)	204

N.B.—Except where otherwise acknowledged the illustrations  
are from photographs by A. Giraudon.

## LIST OF PLANS

- I. PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR AND UPPER GARDENS
- II. PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR
- III. PLAN OF THE GARDENS
- IV. THE TRIANONS





# VERSAILLES UNDER LOUIS XIV

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY THE TWO FACES

*“C'est dans cette maison royale et charmante que vous êtes invités de venir, peuples de la terre, curieux et savants. Vous y verrez l'ancienne et la nouvelle Rome, vous y verrez tout ce que le monde a jamais eu de beau et de suprenant.”*

From a guide to Versailles written in 1681  
by the Seigneur Combes.

IT is best to go there by the longest way, to drive by road from Paris and so let alien thought have time to attune itself with the most French thing in France. For though in outward show it died some hundred and more years ago, yet Versailles lives mightily, like an old dogma, or a natural law embodied once for all, for France.

The English visitor above all others has much prejudice to leave behind: he must forget Macaulay and William of Orange; and Blenheim; and Thackeray. He must leave his newspapers and democracy in the Hotel and with spirit unencumbered go into the heart of France—he will find it in her past, in Versailles.

Let him drive out light-heartedly as on a beautiful adventure; imagine himself in a gilded *carrosse* drawn by four horses—he will not long be alone—ghostly and more magnificent chariots will skim past with mounted escorts—a solitary rider, head bent forward, will race by in a tumult of dust. In short, the distinguished foreigner will soon be in very fine company, among princes of the blood, and despatch bearers from the front, and ambassadors from

## 2 VERSAILLES : ITS LIFE & HISTORY

Persia, Siam and the Grand Turk—drawn irresistibly by the victories and power and beneficence of King Louis XIV. Till gradually, driving under elms descended from the ones that great king planted, along the fine, smooth road he made, the traveller will bear him alone in mind : will forget the very colours of the *tricolor* and the tune of the *Marseillaise* while older words are ringing in his ears, "*Homage is due to kings*," for thus it had been written in His Majesty's childish copy-books. "*Homage is due to kings . . .*" and by that time the last bend of the avenue will be reached. The trees are young, the road is new, he is in 1690, say, at all events in reconciling mood.

Little, in fact, is changed. The road is still terminated at both corners by the royal stables that are barracks now ; and opens out before a great sandy plain, white in the sunshine, a parade ground. A line of cavalry, blue-clad on brown horses, moves across it—slowly as out of the past. Facing the avenue, breaking the ring of trees is a grille, a tall railing of blue and gold with pilasters bearing a lyre and the face of the sungod and the lilies of France. Its gateway leads into a rising courtyard, flanked on either side by buildings that form other courts, open to the eye and growing smaller as they recede towards a distant, central façade. Driving from Paris, the total effect had been vague, that of an assemblage of houses on the brow of a hill, perhaps another town. It is the palace of Versailles.

All go in freely through the gate to-day ; but it is well to pause before the groups of statuary placed on either side over guard-houses. They are the first words spoken by Versailles—often unheeded, symbolic and at the first glance far-fetched in expression. But to the most unlettered Frenchman of 1690 they were history writ large and in 1924 they have a fresh significance. The one on the right figures a winged angel seated on the back of a captured giant : she holds a crown in one hand and with the other touches the branch of palms that a little Cupid offers. Conventional enough, so far. But her foot is placed on an eagle, and an eagle is symbolic of the Austro-German Empire.

In the group on the left, almost identical in conception, the angel's foot rests on a lion, symbol of Spain. In neither trophy is there any flourish of vainglory; the attitudes are noble, the gestures calm and gracious: they record facts: the treaties of Aix-la-Chapelle and of Nimeguen, the acquisition of Flanders and of Franche Comté. They tell of aims pursued through generations, reached at last; of natural frontiers gained for France to north and east—in short, of security and freedom from invasion. Placed there in 1682, these statues proclaim the summit of the king's achievement and the most glorious moment of his reign. The whole palace is a memorial of that moment. In that light must the traveller look at it or Versailles will say little to him.

The gateway leads into the large "Avant Cour" that is surrounded by a number of façades of different height and colour, like a crowd of people of different races, impressive from sheer mass but not interesting. In justice to Louis XIV, to see only that which he and Le Vau and Mansart planned much should be obliterated, and, first of all, the line of superhuman statues on each side—of Bayard, Turenne, Richelieu and the rest. The makers of Versailles would not have tolerated them! They were only placed there in 1837 and through the generosity of an American art lover, will soon be moved away, driven out to the Place d'Armes. What the king and his first architect did build are the houses rising up behind those monstrous statues and almost dwarfed by them—fine, sober, red-brick dwellings almost reminding us of English Queen Anne houses and built for the Secretaries of State: for Versailles was not only a bower of Armida but Downing Street and Foreign Office and Board of Trade and Whitehall. Imagination must obliterate next two grey pavilions like municipal theatres facing the entrance. They have no business here. The one on the right was only built a generation later by Gabriel, architect to King Louis XV, and the other, as pendant, by Dufour as late as 1820. It is their fault, the sense of disproportion and confusion that

the traveller feels on first seeing Versailles. Their height is discordant. Their grey stone and Greco-Roman pediments are incongruous amid the work around, all in the French style of the early seventeenth century. They are all wrong. It is only necessary to glance at an old engraving of the entrance court, as Louis XIV—after many changes—left it, to appreciate the admirable unity of his conception, the charm of Le Vau's original small pavilions and of the unbroken level of roofs, beyond which only the exquisite nave of Mansart's chapel was allowed to soar. Yes, these grey pavilions are a crime.

The courtyard rises. Masonry, massive such as we see in ancient Rome, went to make the slope so gradual, to cover up the ancient moat and raise embankments from the street. Hundreds of men worked there. For years Versailles was like a huge, stone-mason's yard. Indeed the impression made on the traveller so far is one of strength and utility rather than of charm. Still more so when he looks outside the gates at the two strange, semicircular buildings between the avenues diverging from the Place d'Armes—stables admirably planned by Mansart, practical, harmonious, spacious; two thousand and five hundred horses could lodge there, as well as coaches and carriages and pages. And on the south side of the palace stands an enormous plain, square block, a military hospital to-day (and the added story impairs the fine proportions of Mansart's scheme), but he built it as the "Grand Commun," the Servants' Quarters: it lodged twelve hundred people. Louis XIV "saw large."

A modern, equestrian statue of him by Cartellier and Petitot was placed in the middle of the courtyard in 1837. Its position marks that of a former gateway through a second grille entirely gilt that used to mark the Cour Royale. This too was flanked by groups of statuary—that of Abundance, by the great sculptor Coysevox, and of Peace by Tuby. They have been moved to the far front, to opposite corners of the long entrance grille.

Instead, we have the king. More than fitting, indispens-

able. From the first it is he who commands our thoughts and holds them. Besides, this bronze figure on the prancing horse is a satisfying presentment. It stands out finely in the distance: the king says, "Messieurs, ambassadors from all the earth—the world will come back to kingship!" As we draw near all Versailles seems under his shadow.

Beyond the statue lies the Cour Royale or Cour du Louvre into which no carriages could drive but those of royalty, or high nobility possessing the Entrée du Louvre, lesser visitors going in on foot or in their *chaises à porteurs* as can again be seen in the engraving of the frontispiece. There seems a solemn hush upon the place even to-day.

Still more so in the Cour de Marbre. In olden days the traveller would have had to mount three steps to reach it, but its level has been lowered: the change is visible in the columns that have bases out of all proportion, now, and the windows on the ground floor that formerly were doors. He stands at last before the deepest, central façade of Versailles palace. It puzzles him, as do the wings and all that he has seen. The age of Louis XIV when Le Vau built them, was classical, steeped in Greco-Roman taste in architecture as in drama. Why then this old château style, with pink brick and stone panellings, high roofs and dormer windows, reminiscent of those in the Loire country, or of St. Germain, archaic in 1660, belonging to the period of Henri IV, the Vert Galant? Can this be the Versailles that cast a glamour over Europe, and brought those gorgeous envoys from Persia and Siam and the Grand Turk? No, and yes. Janus-like, it has two faces, this and the other—the huge Italian palace lying towards the garden; following this contour and built around it as a stratum, an envelope of another make. This central block, with a long balcony upheld by columns, facing the avenue from Paris is, roughly speaking, the hunting-lodge of the king's father, all that he inherited. It was not old when Louis XIV began his additions.

As late as 1624 Versailles had been but a mean hamlet away from the main roads and hidden in woods that

abounded in game. And Louis XIII was the greatest hunter of his age. So here, on a hill-top where stood a windmill, he built a lodge in which to sleep occasionally with a few friends if the night surprised him far from St. Germain, or Paris. It attracted little attention. The name of his architect hardly survived. The king seldom brought the Court to Versailles. He loved to keep its wide space and stillness for himself. Here he fought his worst battles, flying from a despairing passion, his only one, for a beautiful Maid of Honour. We know that he desired to live and die at Versailles; but he died elsewhere. And years later, in 1660 when his son reached manhood, the hunting-lodge was still all that stood there. It was the first of the three Versailles. It remained the nucleus; it imposed its style: the wings to right and left, all the palace on this side being built piously to match. A far cry indeed from this "*château de cartes*" as Saint Simon has styled it, to the recording angels at the entrance—that mark the completion of the palace in 1682, the third Versailles, the seat of Government.

Twenty years of building lie between.

When the long regency of Anne of Austria was over and Louis XIV had assumed government the country was passing through a great building fever. She had turned to it instinctively and eagerly. The long upheavals of the Ligue and Fronde were over. France was one and strong, roused to a new, national impulse and a sense of wider greatness still to come.

At such moments it would seem that nations always set themselves to raise beautiful and lasting stonework all over their own land, to lay out gardens, to conquer nature—to create. It is a part of the vigour flowing through them. So convents, churches, colleges sprang up rapidly. Richelieu built himself a palace of enormous magnificence, his successor, the Italian Mazarin, raised another to hold his curios and art treasures. Rich men in Paris or the provinces

built new houses or transformed mediæval châteaux into Roman villas. Building was the fashionable hobby.

England caught the fever. She too had her great architects. The skyline of London is as rich as that of Paris to-day with roofs and towers of the same age. While the elder Mansart raised the lovely dome of the Val de Grâce as thank-offering for the birth of Louis Dieu-Donné, Inigo Jones built Greenwich Hospital and Whitehall Palace. England and France worked, as it were, within hail of each other. Perrault added his famous colonnade to the Louvre. Wren restored Hampton Court. Le Vau began Versailles. Wren went to France before completing his designs for St. Paul's, and Le Nôtre visited England to lay out gardens for St. James'. It continued to the end of the century, till Wren had built up all the City churches and Hardouin-Mansart had crowned Paris with the dome of the Invalides.

It was, however, only some time after his accession to power—only when the death of Cardinal Mazarin left him free to handle money—that Louis XIV, he who was to be the most ardent builder of his age, to build unceasingly for fifty years, could indulge his taste. Till then it seemed that everyone could build except the king. He saw himself humiliated before his subjects and his young queen from Spain, in that he alone had no palace of stone in the Italian style. Mortification reached its climax when his *Surintendant des Finances* entertained him with a fête of unprecedented royal splendour at the castle he had newly built for himself not far from Fontainebleau. Fouquet had employed the greatest artists living. Enough is left of Vaux le Vicomte to-day, of the moated courtyard and its grille surmounted by great classic busts, of the domed roof of Le Vau and the decorations of Lebrun, of the garden with its sheets of water and statuary and fountains, where Le Nôtre practised his genius—we see enough to realize the astonishment of the king, and the picture that throughout all the later making of Versailles must have been indelibly even if subconsciously at the background of his mind and of all decisions. A few months after that

fête, in the summer of 1661, followed the dramatic trial of Fouquet, and his imprisonment for embezzling State funds. Colbert, the successor to his office, transferred his staff of artists bodily to the service of the king. Vaux le Vicomte had been the transition from Fontainebleau, a school of art for Versailles.

So it was that in 1661 the king began to build. Did he then merely contemplate a moderate enlargement of his father's hunting-lodge, a country château for his own leisure? Or did he already vision Versailles as a symbol, a splendid, luminous symbol of kingship—of the monarchy as he splendidly conceived it, what he honestly tried to make it, the most complete and beneficent exercise of human power? Louis XIV even from his youth was intensely reserved. We know little of his thoughts.

We know he had often hunted there as a child. From the fine fêtes he gave there as a king, and from the frequency of his visits we know that as a man he was strongly attracted to the place and that his choice roused astonishment from all. None thought the site favourable. We know that the money he spent on it brought bold remonstrance from Colbert, who in his jealous patriotism considered that Versailles did not promise enough dignity for France, who pointed out that posterity judged the greatness of a monarch from the buildings that he left and who wished the Louvre to be finished. But Louis XIV disliked Paris. He had bitter childish memories of the Fronde and of privations, and ignominious flight with his mother from the Louvre. As for the other crown residences, Fontainebleau was royal but archaic, above all, complete. Vincennes was a fortress. It is true St. Germain, his birthplace, offered attractions, and he did build large additions to the Vieux Château, but it was hemmed in by the town and by the hill slope to the river. Expansion was impossible. Whereas Versailles offered space, building land practically unlimited:—irresistible attraction to Louis XIV.

Le Vau was his first architect and naturally planned a palace in the Italian style. For though French and English

architects when it came to their best work did forget Bernini—though Mansart, a greater man than Le Vau, was as French as Wren is English, though art in France grew more French with every year of the king's reign, still for type all turned to Rome. (Even in religious buildings. We find no northern sense of mystery, no shadowed aisles or dim stained glass in churches of the Grand Siècle, where the errors of Jansenists or Quietists or Jesuits were exposed, where Massillon and Bossuet built up their stately sermons stone upon stone before nobly intellectual congregations. Theirs were cool, white and spacious—with light streaming through large windows ; logical, clear-cut churches. We might almost call them lecture halls, fronted with classic porticoes—their chief beauty being that of line.) All builders seem to have taken for their motto the fine words of Inigo Jones, “Architecture should be solemn, proportional to the rules, masculine and unaffected.” This spirit influenced churches and secular buildings. It was the last expression of the Renaissance, and found its culmination in Versailles. Byzantine, Gothic and now Classic, all had had their say. Indeed architecture has not found another language. Nothing of importance has been built in Europe since Versailles.

But the king would not pull down his father's château. And yet the front towards Paris was from the first considered unsuitable, because insufficiently impressive. Brick was contemptibly out of fashion. Only the stables had been built of brick at Fouquet's palace. Even Mademoiselle de Scudery in her enthusiastic “Promenade à Versailles” veils criticism when she calls it “*La petite maison du plus grand roi de la terre.*” As for our own poet Gray, writing sixty years later, he calls it “*an infinite heap of littleness.*”

Why was the king so obstinate ? Entirely from respect to a father he had hardly known ? Or because Versailles was to him a casket enclosing deeper, richer memories ?

For to this small, old Versailles Louis XIV, in all the flush of youth and irresistible passion had brought Louise de la Valliere, maid of Honour to Henrietta of England,

Duchesse d'Orléans. In a room above you will see her pictured in her flower-like, tragic beauty. He was twenty-one, Louise de la Valliere eighteen. It was the month of May. They hunted in the woods, they wandered in the gardens, they danced, they loved. They told each other every night the thoughts and secrets of the day: they had vowed to do it. In her honour, or in honour of love, the king gave the glorious, unforgettable festival known as "Les Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée"; its very name is romance. All the world heard of it. It was a kind of pageant that took place in the garden and lasted for three days, somewhat in the style of the twelve days' festival of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Molière, Lebrun, Le Nôtre, classics all, were its producers, but the gallant story was taken from romance, from Ariosto: and it was all the romance of the Middle Ages that lived again in a scene outshining all the splendours of the Arabian Nights. Fruits and flowers of all seasons had been gathered from all countries. Trees, fire and water played their parts. And all the pageant was in praise of love—a king's love. Louise de la Valliere, the Princesse d'Elide, and not the little queen, was the unacknowledged heroine of the feast.

And if Louis XIV did see himself as an Olympian above moral law, and as Amadis de Gaul, and Charlemagne at the head of feasting paladins, all France agreed with him. For if he had not as yet scattered her enemies, called out her riches, ripened her arts he was the day-spring rising; soon he would take the sun for emblem; already he had dazzled France. And how could his love not overwhelm a timid, adoring creature such as Louise de la Valliere? She must have felt as Danae did when covered by a shower of gold. Such lovers must have lived in a dream, and felt themselves as gods.

Is it any wonder if long after she was dead for him within the walls of Carmel, and through all the solidity of later achievements and of grosser passions the king secretly, half-unconsciously, honoured the memory of that dream? Louis XIV was to the end a romantic, a sentimentalist, if

you will. Perhaps in rare solitary moments when he outrode the hunters in the woods of Satory, with the breath of May anemones there would come a flash of his own youth, shining white and gallant in that love. Awestruck perhaps he would measure his own fall ; and so—in a kind of superb egoism, as a shrine of his own former self—keep the old Versailles.

It was soon outgrown almost to absurdity by the regal façade built by Le Vau on the other side ; the second Versailles (that is connected roughly to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle just as the third, completed by Mansart, coincides with the Treaty of Nimeguen ten years later). For twenty years the building never stopped. Versailles grew with the king's greatness and stopped significantly at its zenith.

And though in the next century much was changed within its walls, what we see outside is still substantially Le Vau's structure. You may still point to Versailles palace east or west, towards town or garden, and say it is by Le Vau ; and this though he died some years before the completion of his plans. The work of his successor Jules Hardouin-Mansart—whose young genius the king quickly recognized, the Orangerie, Galerie des Glaces, Aile du Nord, and du Midi, the Chapel and so on—are additions, crowning pieces, making Versailles magnificently French ; not structural parts.

Sometimes, however, Mansart modified. He too longed to pull down the old brick building—the palace on the front towards Paris—and failed ; and so with astonishing suppleness of mind set to work to beautify it on its own lines, and did it extraordinarily well. He connected the pavilions with the wings and left the courtyard practically as we see it ; he added a second story to the central façade, to emphasize the royal rooms—and so certainly gave dignity to the seat of monarchy. Overhead, he placed the charming clock with turquoise face and the head of the sun god, the clock that only stopped when a king of France died. He made the little French château as mythological as possible—placed busts of Roman emperors on

pedestals against the walls, Hercules and Mars over the clock, and goddesses and royal attributes and the four quarters of the globe in careless attitudes around the ledge of the roof. And though they are conceived conventionally, in the style of Bernini—they have a French vivacity, they are by fine artists, Minerva is by Girardon, Justice and Strength by Coysevox, Abundance by Marsy. This Cour de Marbre must have had a joyous, elegant charm of its own.

In the palace hangs a contemporary painting of it, catching as it does to-day all the eastern sun. Then, as now, the pink brick walls and jasper columns glowed; while the high slates shone blue or green or silver under changing clouds. But in those days the carved lead foliage round the oval windows of the roof, and the band of filigree along the top, were rich with gold. And the fine balcony rails where crowns and lilies and the king's monogram are beautifully interwreathed—the work of Dolabel—they too girdled the palace with a chain of gold. A fountain splashed in the middle of the marble floor and birds from Africa darted gay colours through the air. The distant view seen through the long gold grille across the court was charming, more charming then than now. There could be no more satisfying foreground to hills and rich green woods than stone houses and slate roofs kept purposely low. Louis XIV would not have tolerated the audacious height of the new Hôtel de Ville.

Many a traveller breaks away from other tourists, leaves them round the foot of the king's statue, just as a courtier formerly might have left the coaches, and the bustle and the Guard of Honour drawn up in lines waiting for loud trumpets and the musketeers heralding the king, and would come alone into this courtyard. Drawn away as far as possible, beyond the Ambassadors' entrance that was on the right and the queen's upon the left, as now, there must always have been a hush upon it; for you cannot drive into the Cour de Marbre, and it leads nowhere; only straight into the past.

And for that it is best to come here on a summer evening when the travellers and workmen are gone and only a distant murmur rises from the town, when the light is dying and the palace walls surrounding us are cold and pale ; for the glow of sunset does not reach this side. The windows all around are closed. Wait . . . We may hear the rustle of brocade, a courtly voice, a high-bred laugh—or only silence : but a silence thick with happenings. We feel the significance and majesty of this small space ; we feel it as the beating heart of France ; and it will need no special psychic power to see ghostly hands draw back the gilt carved shutters, and historic faces looking down, reminding us that from those rooms Europe took her orders for a hundred years : England was pensioned, Spain inherited, Alsace secured, Canada lost ; that men and women with great names spent human lives there, and that their dramas of human passion were none the less heart-tearing because cloaked in stately gesture.

In the oldest, central part we see Richelieu hurrying up a dark, secret staircase to the king's room. It is the *Journée des Dupes* and he had outwitted Anne of Austria and her faction and turned defeat to victory : to the policy that Louis XIV and his successors will pursue. Through windows on the left a crowd of large-wigged courtiers gaze, idling away weary moments with much gossip and furtive watching of each other, while the restless *Duc de Saint Simon*, *pair de France*, watches too, and listens to them all and takes notes, somehow : until the giant Swiss usher opens double doors and cries, “ *Messieurs, le Roi !* ”

From a corner window to the left the old king himself looks out, waiting with fierce impatience but everlasting self-mastery for messengers to clatter up the courtyard on spent horses, with news from the front. Good news. . . . It never comes nowadays. . . . Madame de Maintenon sits working at her tapestry.

On the balcony just opposite Louis XV, the *Bien Aimé*, stands bareheaded on a winter's pelting night to watch the black cortège that is following the body of Madame de

Pompadour, "his best friend for twenty years." From a gold-wreathed dormer window overhead the lovely face of the Du Barry looks down smiling on nobles who despise, yet court her. And from the Cour Royale, Charles Edward, with all the Stuart glamour dulled, a disconsolate fugitive from Culloden, is being smuggled into the palace for a secret audience. . . . But suddenly the silence and soft movements of the place are shattered by voices such as these stately walls never heard before. Weary, rough, bedraggled women who have spent the night out on the ground are shouting with the concentrated hatred of years at a tall woman who stands on the long, central balcony, alone.

We were waiting for her. For us she embodies Versailles as fully as does Louis XIV; and her spirit lives there just as vividly. She is pale from the terrors of the night but unutterably proud with all the concentrated pride of Hapsburgs and Bourbons. She stands quite still with her hands on the rail. She cannot understand why the women hate her but with pent breath faces them, waiting to be stoned or torn to pieces. Until at last a young-looking man comes out and bends to kiss her hand; and speaks and then the screaming, "Mort—Mort à l'Autrichienne!" dies down. But it is Marie Antoinette who stills the mob, not Lafayette: or the spirit of the Grand Monarque who had died alone and fearless in the room behind. His courage comes on her and wins a last triumph for the monarchy.

If we wait a little longer we will plainly see a disorderly procession: a fine royal carriage rumbling out of Versailles palace, escorted nominally by Lafayette's guard, but once outside the gates surrounded by old carts and dirty barrows in which the same viragoes stand and wave and shout their foolish jeers about the Baker and the Baker's Wife and the Mitron. We watch them across the white Place d'Armes, till the rumbling and vague rumour die away. Versailles is silent in offended majesty. Yellow leaves float from the elms of the Avenue de Paris. . . .

Around us the shutters of the palace are being softly closed. It is the sixth of October, 1789.

But Versailles has another front: that of the uniform classic palace, the real Versailles known to all the world, and the two ways to reach it lie beyond the wings that enclose this Cour de Marbre: on the north through the Cour de la Chapelle, on the south through the Cour des Princes. Each brings the traveller out into the corner where a long, side wing joins the central block that protrudes westwards. Let us not stop to look at the prospect of flowers and water, of shining space and wooded hills, we would never tear ourselves away; we must follow the central block and go beyond it far enough to turn and gather the whole façade of Versailles, its entire length of eighteen hundred feet pierced by three hundred and seventy-five windows into one view, slowly. The first impression is one of enormous, overwhelming length and bulk. Versailles is white and huge, and endless and horizontal.

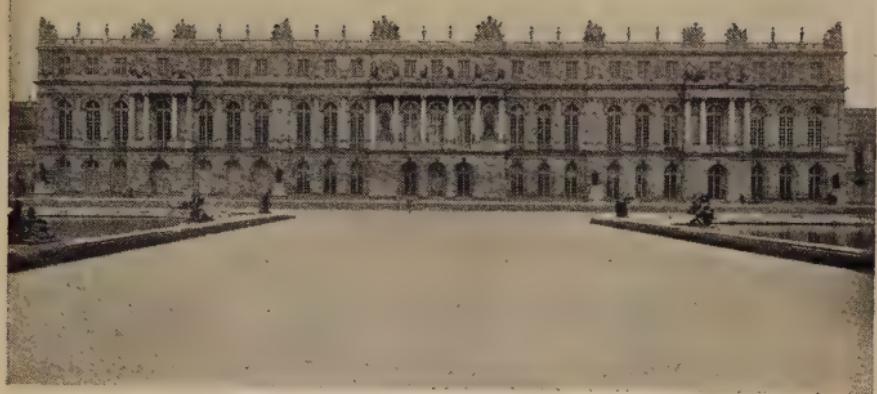
It is built, so to say, in the Italian style; for on this side of the palace king and architects were unhampered by sentiment or want of space. But there is nothing local, nothing Florentine or even contemporary Roman in it. The king wished this incarnation of the French monarchy to speak to the world in the language of all nations, to be like the Latin tongue, like ancient Rome. There is indeed something universal and without a date in the aspect of Versailles. It is truly classic.

The central block containing the royal dwelling-rooms and the State apartments was built by Le Vau in 1664 up against the old palace; it is the "enveloppe" surrounding it. Until the Revolution through all its history, the pageantry of the Court took place in its rooms. But the Court soon outgrew it and the south wing, the Aile des Princes, was added by Mansart in 1682, the Aile du Nord being only finished in 1869. The king could then accommodate ten thousand persons. His palace was a town.

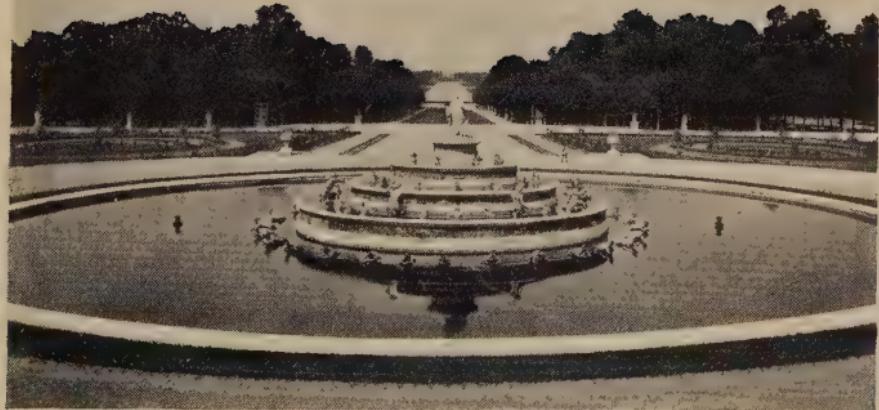
Its architecture has been severely criticized. In the first place its skyline is thought dull. True, Le Vau, to make the place more royal hid the roof with an attic story and stone balustrade and this though the high slate roof survived in France through all the classic invasion, though Le Vau himself had built one for Fouquet at Vaux le Vicomte. But if he did not, as Bernini would have done in Rome, place monster statues in perilous position on the edge, only low trophies and vases, it was because he did not wish to disturb the prevailing horizontal effect. We think them entirely satisfactory. The palace was intended to be simple, in a grand way, and yet unobtrusive: not to stand out but to blend with the landscape. Thus when Mansart, later, arched the windows on the first floor, and this too was criticized, he knew what he was doing, he thought of the Gardens. For from the steps towards the Grand Canal we lose sight of the *rez-de-chausée*: and so a contrast with the attic windows was more valuable.

The façade is considered excessively long, formal and monotonous. Originally, in the central block as built by Le Vau, there was a terrace in the middle of the first floor with flowers and a fountain, and terminated at the north corner by the king's room, and by the queen's on the south: but its position was afterwards filled by Mansart's Galerie des Glaces so that the front is now unbroken except by small groups of columns and pilasters and statues of the twelve months on the "étage noble" and by four bronzes down below of Silene, Apollo, Antinous, Bacchus.

There is austerity in the rectangular Versailles front, built all of stone with no sheen of marble to enliven it, no glow of jasper anywhere, no gold or bronze. It seems a plain casket for the riches stored within. But we shall see these colourless stone walls live, blend with dark clouds, or glisten shadowless from end to end bleached white by sunshine. Its windows make a ring of flame at sunset. Versailles is beautiful. Besides with every step in the gardens we shall realize more that this solemn,



CENTRAL FAÇADE OF VERSAILLES  
Towards the Gardens



THE FOUNTAIN OF LATONA



enormous palace is but a part of a whole planned from the first together with the gardens. Just as they with their parterres and avenues continue the architectural lines of the palace so the palace is the centre of the gardens, rising with them and their *raison d'être*. Le Nôtre saw it from afar, shining pearl-coloured at the end of watery vistas. Mansart saw it from the woods of Satory in profile, piled up and massive like another Vatican, a summit to his Orangerie. Lebrun saw it as a picture for reflection in his Parterre d'Eau. The king saw palace, woods and water, saw Versailles perfect in detail, complete in unity, as a symbol, a banner of French glory.

And yet the English traveller hesitates. He stands before this home of French kings built from end to end, symmetrical, clear-cut and faultless, within thirty years. It seems to quiver from the flash of one man's will. There is a picture in his mind . . . it clings persistently . . . of a rugged keep, grey as the rock on which it stands, with dungeons down below, and towers jutting fantastically up above. It is fortress, prison, palace—home of English kings: its cloisters built in the twelfth century, its tower in the eleventh, its older part—we do not know. By whom? We never knew. Windsor Castle has no time, nor form. Would he exchange? Never. Windsor is the most precious, the most English thing in England. But he must not compare it with the most French thing in France. Windsor is wild and dark: like a play of Shakespeare's, like Macbeth. Versailles has the perfection and restraint of a tragedy by Racine. Each is fine because sincere and national. Windsor is English and Versailles is French.

## CHAPTER II

### L'APPARTEMENT DU ROI

*"C'est à Versailles où le Roi, pendant qu'il ne semblait songer qu'à divertir sa cour et qu'à se divertir lui-même, formait ces grandes entreprises que nous lui avons vu si glorieusement exécuter, c'est dela qu'il partit pour aller conquérir la Flandre . . . et c'est là encore qu'il conçut l'héroïque dessein . . . de conquérir la Franche Comté aussi promptement que César vainquait autrefois."*

Madeleine de Scudery. 1679.

**W**E must now go inside and on the way ask ourselves, what did Versailles really do? We know that to a large extent it shaped French history for good or evil, but what did it do for French art? The answer is, it brought French art back to France. We must remember, the time of its building was that of an intense, renewed nationalism, a pride of country such as England felt in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and in no two hearts in France did that flame burn brighter than in that of the king who absorbed it all into the monarchy and that of Colbert who was jealous patriot as well as Superintendent of the Royal Buildings. Art too must serve France! To that end it was organized by them. The "Gobelins" in 1663 was made the royal school of Arts and Crafts under Charles Lebrun, the Académie de Sculpture et de Peinture founded in 1664 gave new prestige to artists as apart from craftsmen. And further, to give young Frenchmen free opportunity of direct study of the antique—while, however, keeping them under obligation to France—the Académie Française was opened in Rome.

Now Colbert did not want this to be misunderstood. So far it was not only the art of ancient Rome—which,

after all, belonged to all the world—but that of seventeenth-century Rome, of contemporary Venice and Florence and Bologna that he saw supreme, whose supremacy France herself had recognized since the days of Fontainebleau. The great Poussin himself who “saw all nature through antiquity” had long ago remained in Italy: he was recalled for the construction of the Louvre, but went back, and died in Rome.

Colbert had other dreams. Let those young French pensioners at the Villa Medici drink from the fountain head, absorb Rome, and Greece through Rome, and all antiquity if they could, but only in order to translate it into French, so to say, when they came back; only to improve on modern Italy and so win for France the supremacy of art in Europe.

Versailles, their own king's new palace, made this possible, provided an object, a visible incentive: Versailles, with new bare walls that needed pictures, and new ceilings that waited for stucco, and empty gardens to be peopled with statues. Henceforth Versailles was the centre of all art in France. Henceforth it took the place of the Louvre. We may imagine that not only the great painters of the Académie and the weavers at the Gobelins, but village carpenters and locksmiths throughout France worked with fond secret visions of Versailles, where the king was always ready to consider good work, to discern and appreciate, and to pay magnificently. Versailles is thus as representative of the best art and craft of France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the Queen's Doll's House is of English art to-day. If it produced no Leonardo da Vinci or Benvenuto Cellini, well, even Louis XIV could not command genius, and Versailles is the more magnificently patriotic. Indeed the standard is very high, and the most prejudiced traveller, who has taste, and quiet hours to spend, will have the greater delight of surprise in discovering constant, unexpected loveliness and originality that is all French within Versailles walls.

The first impression is as disappointing as that of a famous city near its railway station.

From the far end of the Cour de la Chapelle we go into an entrance hall always full of tourists and encumbered by umbrella-stands. Somehow we soon forget them. For the view seen through tall windows, and the beautiful supple allegory by Coustou of King Louis XIV at the Passage of the Rhine in June, 1672—striking a significant, proud note at once, it was the feat continually and rightly present in French minds, we shall find it pictured many times in Versailles—and the space and whiteness—and the great portals with the royal monogram carved in gold that hide the chapel are after all palatial.

Here stood formerly the famous Grotto of Thetis that was one of the marvels of Versailles. La Fontaine who visited it together with Racine and Boileau describes its fine gold rails, its marble statuary and above all its fountain that was a marvel of hydraulic science and that fed all the fountains in the garden. It was demolished for the building of the Aile du Nord.

By a stone winding staircase we reach the upper *Vestibule de la Chapelle* (83) of equal size, and all of ivory whiteness to harmonize with the Chapel—through open doors we see its luminous nave, we will come back to it later: it was only used for the last five years of the king's reign—and we pass on into the *Salon d'Hercule* (105). This magnificent room formed actually the upper part of the previous third chapel of Versailles—that in which Fénelon and Bossuet actually preached and where the king's midnight marriage with Madame de Maintenon took place. A small contemporary painting of it hangs in Madame de Maintenon's room; it shows the king before the assembled Court kneeling to receive the vows of the Marquis de Dangeau on being installed Grand Master of an order of knights. We recognize there the angle of the Aile du Nord, seen through a window on the ground floor; while the royal tribune up above is the actual room in which we stand. It was there too the marriage took place of the young Duc de Bourgogne—the

king's heir—with a little princess from Savoy. Only after the completion of the present final chapel in 1710 did the Salon d'Hercule take its present aspect.

Its decoration belongs actually to the reign of Louis XV, and should, strictly speaking, be studied with his part of the palace. But we know that the Grand Monarque had collected its marbles. Its style belongs loyally to his period. Robert de Cotte, its architect, had worked under him. His portraits and his presence dominate the room. We will look at it. The position of the Salon d'Hercule, being the passage of the whole Court on the way to Mass, justified a special splendour. It is very light, having large windows to the east and west. Its walls make a beautiful harmony of coloured marbles in panels and medallions, between pilasters of red and mauve porphyry, Marbre de Rance. Robert de Cotte evidently worked with the Galerie des Glaces in mind—though in the bronze capitals Vassé has carved acanthus leaves instead of the palms and cocks of the “French Order” inaugurated there by Lebrun. The immense chimney-piece has bronzes also carved by Vassé: a magnificent head of Hercules between cornucopias overflowing with grapes, vigorous lions' heads below, and in a panel of green marble up above a contrastingly delicate medallion of Hercules at rest. The wonderful gilt wood frame above, enclosing Mignard's “*Louis XIV crowned by Victory*,” was carved by the same sculptor but for another picture by Paul Veronese. So was also the frame on the opposite wall that is now round a somewhat faded and restored “*Passage of the Rhine*,” but formerly enclosed the same Venetian master's “*Banquet at the House of Simon the Pharisee*,” given to Louis XIV by the Republic of Venice and now hanging in the Louvre. We are thus early introduced to the wood-carving which forms so attractive a feature in the art of Versailles, and that we can trace throughout the palace, from seventeenth-century style to late eighteenth.

The chief glory, however, of the Salon d'Hercule is the ceiling. If the walls with their marbles are seventeenth

century that at least is pure eighteenth. Its enormous surface of 61 ft. by 56 ft. is covered by one canvas without help from stucco work or any subdivisions. Its subject is the *Apotheosis of Hercules*, a hero who always haunted Versailles' artists. (Lebrun's first scheme for the Galerie des Glaces had been in that idea.) It is here pictured as the triumph of Virtue over all the obstacles of Fate. Le Moyne (1688-1737) took six years to paint it, 1730-36, and died in tragic circumstances ten months after its completion. His other most important work is the allegorical portrait of Louis XIV in the *Salon de la Paix*. He himself had not been to the Académie in Rome, those scholarships having been temporarily suppressed for want of money, but he had travelled in Italy and been deeply impressed by the work of Michel Angelo.

We must not, however, compare this ceiling of his with the sublime achievement of the Sistine Chapel. It pictures no far-seeing schemes of divinity and no depths of human tragedy. It is purely decorative art. Its scene is in calm Olympus among clouds floating serenely on a sky of blue. Tradition says that Le Moyne spent more on ultramarine than he received in payment for the whole. As if to sustain that ethereal world a balustrade of simulated stonework is painted round the cornice; with grisaille figures: children, horses, glories and dogs, amid garlands of oak leaves; and in the corners are Strength, Constancy, Honesty and Justice, enthroned emblematically. On the canvas itself that is stretched upon the ceiling, Le Moyne had painted no less than 142 figures. Jupiter sits on high, while Virtue takes Hercules by the hand and leads him to the throne. Hebe, crowned with roses, awaits him as his prize. The Vices are crushed underfoot, and Mars calmly watches their headlong flight. Time holds his scythe back as if he recognized that great deeds have no death, and Apollo, a young and radiant figure, points to the temple of Memory where the Muses will record them. Near him are the twin gods Castor and Pollux, crowned with stars. Comus is invited to prepare a banquet. Morpheus lies

asleep while Dreams strew poppies over him, and near by Dew empties her urn into the clouds. There are Venus and the Graces and Diana, and Iris with her bow. There is all Olympus, conceived with enormous wealth of imagination ; and even now in certain lights, the colouring is vivid.

This room was used for balls and was lit by seven great chandeliers of rock crystal, and by silver candelabras. It was magnificently furnished. Tribunes were placed around it, and against the mantelpiece the king's orchestra was placed, dressed in blue dominoes. Many historical festivities took place here. The last two have a link of tragedy : that given at the marriage of Marie Antoinette to Louis XVI in 1769 when she was beautiful in an unformed way, half-queen, half-hoyden—and the other after a hundred and forty years, in 1906, to the Tsar Nicholas of Russia and his newly married Empress, who was very beautiful and young and stately. France from east to west had thundered welcome. This old palace became once more a fairy land of flowers and jewels and light. In this *Salon d'Hercule* Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest of French tragediennes, declaimed poetry ; and there was wonderful music given to the sovereigns, and to Court ladies in shimmering brocade and ambassadors from all the world. The splendours of the *Ancien Régime* lived again. And when all was over Tsar and Tsaritsa drove away into the darkness back to Russia. The shade of Marie Antoinette and that of Louis XVI should have whispered warnings of revolution, dethronement, death ; though even they, clairvoyant spirits, could hardly have visioned the horrors of the cellar at Ekaterinenburg.

We come next into the *Salon de l'Abondance* (106) and straight into the reign of Louis XIV. It formed part of the Grand Appartement du Roi but was an anteroom into the Cabinet des Bijoux beyond (137 and 138) where the king stored his collection of gems, cameos and antiques, acquired by purchase or gift, or inheritance from Mazarin—the Italian Cardinal had been the first to train his artistic sense.

Louis XIV early aspired to be a patron of the arts, a successor to Francis I. His was a magnificent collection, and we know that when our own King James II fled to France in 1689, on his first visit to Versailles he was brought to see these treasures. Many of them are in the Louvre to-day and others, appropriately in Mazarin's own palace, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. So the decoration of this *Salon de l'Abondance* is suggestive of the room to which it led ; the vases at the corners of the ceiling being reproductions of actual ones the visitor would see ; the draperies too being painted copies of tapestries in the collection. Round the ceiling Houasse has painted Europe, Amphitrite and Neptune. Abundance, attended by Science, holds a bowl that overflows with gems. Round the rich balustrade are vases of agate and chased gold.

At Court festivities this room was used for refreshments. A silver buffet in the form of a shell contained chocolate, coffee, sorbets and liqueurs. The contemporary *Mercure de France* says, "Very excellent wine is served here ; and those who are in the room hasten to serve those who enter. Everything is done with much order and propriety."

On the walls are battle scenes by pupils of Van der Meulen, a Dutch artist whom Colbert attached to the service of France, who became the king's military painter and accompanied him on all campaigns. We shall come to love his large, luminous landscapes of Flanders and of Holland, his sense of wind and distance, his sincerity and realism of detail.

But in reaching the *Salon de Venus* (107) we are in the famous "Grand Appartement du Roi," a suite of five rooms named after the planets in accordance with the tradition of Versailles where the king was Roi Soleil. They were the first to be built, simultaneously with those of the queen on the other side, and aroused enormous attention. The *Mercure de France* records zealously the completion of each while all Europe watched.

To us they seem the least attractive in the palace ! Even their outlook on the gardens is the least spacious and

enchanting of any. They face north. They have no mirrors. More than all others they cry out for furniture and life and voices.

We must move through them with respect because these empty rooms breathed once with such grand life and shone with the greatest glory of the Grand Siècle. True, their day was short. After the completion of the Galerie des Glaces in 1684 we hear less of them. They became chiefly a magnificent passage, an “allée lumineuse” through which dazzled envoys were conducted to the throne room, or the Court passed on its stately way to the Chapel. But until this comparative effacement they served as stage for all the ceremonies that made this Court the most brilliant in Europe. And the fourteen years or so of their glory were just the most splendid, crowded ones of the king’s reign. It was to them he returned from campaigns in Flanders and Franche Comté. They alone saw him victorious, as Roi Soleil, “toujours environné de lumière et de magnificence.” Here le Grand Condé and Turenne met and bowed low to each other. La Grande Mademoiselle swept through them with her perpetual air of firing cannons from the Bastille, and Athenais Marquise de Montespan shone in transcendent, overwhelming beauty. Life was pitched to a high note ; life was magnificent to live and watch in these rooms. Life was magnificently set. Masterpieces of Titian and Rubens and Van Dyck hung on these walls, and if the air rang with laughter it was over works of genius : “Tartufe,” “Le Mariage Forcé,” “L’Ecole des Femmes” were all given at Versailles for the first time : legend says the king here made Molière dine with him : and when the Court danced, it was to the music of Jean Baptiste Lully, directed by himself. Mademoiselle de Scudery describes their magnificent furniture, the mirrors and silver, the lapis lazuli and gold filigree ; so that “celebrated travellers declared their splendour to be above that of the Grand Mogul and of all other kings on earth.” Madame de Sévigné had seen no other rooms in Versailles when she describes, “Cette sorte de royale beauté unique dans le monde.”

And yet we who will pass on to the greatness and simplicity and French spirit of the Galerie des Glaces and Salon de la Guerre, those rooms that saw the sober years of the king's old age and defeats and griefs, we who will delight in the work of Mansart and Lebrun and Coysevox cannot see this grand apartment with such dazzled eyes. It is these decorations seen most to justify the epithet "grandiose" and "dull," so often thrown at Versailles art. At best we say they are interesting in the light of continuity, from them we are able to measure the immense distance Versailles art travelled towards the restraint and exquisite French taste of those later rooms.

At its greatest there, in its beginning here, what really is this Versailles art? Decorative. The king wished for a background to his pageantry. If it was he provided events, composed as it were the drama that was to show the glory of France to foreigners and make Frenchmen passionately French, for this he needed equally magnificent, edifying and patriotic scenery. And to this the talent of Lebrun—under whose unified command all the Versailles painters, stucco workers, goldsmiths, weavers worked either on the spot or at the Gobelins—lent itself admirably. He had a genius for organization, a just sense of effect, and endless imagination. He too improved. For him, for them all, Versailles was a training school of taste. These rooms were its beginning.

They are, therefore, naturally very ornate, very mythological and very Italian, with ceilings richly painted and much use of stucco and of marble. Only the marbles did not come from Italy. Colbert saw to that. French quarries only were exploited. We shall see Marbre de Campan, a green kind from the Pyrenees, and Marbre de Bourbonnais, red, white and black, and marble so called d'Egypte, of emerald green, and the red marble of Languedoc and the beautiful "Breches," a composite, mottled kind.

And the stucco that is so Italian in spirit is all carved by Frenchmen and gradually becomes French in spirit too. For if Caffieri, who first carved these doors and was the

founder of a dynasty of carvers, whose work can be seen in the Wallace Collection in London, was originally Italian, he was quickly naturalized as Frenchman ; so was Cucci, who forged the locks and window bolts with exquisite workmanship. We shall soon see what fine original work was done in this "stage scenery."

The *Salon de Venus* (107), the first to be reached from the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, was therefore decorated with great splendour. The doors that opened from the staircase are flanked by pillars with bronze Ionic capitals and bases. Its walls are panelled in precious, soft-toned marbles. The cold, solemn statue of Louis XIV wearing Roman armour and a wig, in the alcove, is by Warin. Two curious pictures by Jacques, schemes of perspective calculated to carry on the architectural lines of the room and lengthen it, represent, one a typical Italian temple with colonnades and a dome, the other, a garden with two trees that we imagine as suggestive of the famous poplars placed by Le Nôtre at the far end of the Grand Canal. Between the windows again are niches in grisaille enclosing simulated statues of Meleager and Atalanta. All this grisaille and soft cameo provides effective relief to the gold and brilliance of the ceiling that is painted by Houasse. The four lateral pictures represent Cæsar Augustus presiding at the games, Nebuchadnezzar and Semiramis building the gardens of Babylon, the marriage of Alexander and Roxana and a review of his army by King Cyrus, and these are grouped around an oval picture of the Triumph of Venus. The goddess sits in a chariot drawn by doves ; while gods and heroes sing her praise. Here the colouring is indeed fresh and lovely, with exquisite wreaths of flowers round the chariot and again in the elaborate groups at the corners. The very rich frieze and cornice of gold stucco is carved by the brothers Marsy. The furniture and curtains were of green velvet. This *Salon de Venus* was the chief refreshment-room. Here were dishes of silver and crystal, and gold filigree piled with fresh fruits from all parts of the world, and preserved fruits and cakes amid a profusion of

flowers and silver candelabras. And we are told that ladies could eat to their hearts' content, for the dishes were constantly replenished.

Next comes the *Salon de Diane* (108), the walls of which also form an exquisite harmony of marbles. Here the ceiling painted by Blanchard is in soft moonlight shades. The huntress is seated in a chariot drawn by hounds and surrounded by Night, Repose, Study, Hunting and Navigation. Four semicircular pictures surround this central scheme. One significant in the light of French colonization represents Julius Cæsar sending soldiers off to Carthage. Another charming one represents Cyrus hunting the boar amid fresh woodland scenery. These are by Claude Audran. Cyrus always attracted the French mind, and the artist painting the young, vigorous, radiant hunter must have had his own king in mind. The two others—Jason embarking with the Argonauts and Alexander hunting a lion—are by De la Fosse, a painter much influenced by Rubens and Van Dyck, and who was in later work to become a fine colourist. We shall see more important work of his in the Chapel, and above all in the dome of the Invalides in Paris. De la Fosse went to London too: Lord Montagu, who had been ambassador in Paris, summoned him to decorate Montagu House.

We must notice a small bas-relief let into the mantelpiece. Its spirit is antique, Athenian. It represents the flight into Egypt—in the manner of a Greek frieze. The woman holding up a basket might be out of the Elgin marbles. But the little angels suggest the Renaissance.

The place of honour in this room is again given to Louis XIV. On a bronze pedestal carved by Mazeline and Jouvenet stands his bust executed by Bernini in 1665. This Roman sculptor had been extravagantly admired by the French in the earlier part of the century, summoned to Paris to make plans for the Louvre and received with honour. But his influence afterwards declined. Here, as has been said by a recent biographer of Louis XIV, the Italian has laid bare something of a Cæsar in the young

French king, imaged in all the splendour of success and power and physical strength. Perhaps Louis XIV had imperial ambitions, until good sense prevailed.

The doors carved by Caffieri are surmounted by gold cameos. One shows Diana protecting Arethusa from Alpheus and the other Diana and Acteon.

Over the fire-place hangs a very stately portrait of the king's small wife, Maria Theresa, surrounded by a magnificent garland of flowers wrought in bronze. Opposite hangs a replica of Rigaud's portrait, now in the Louvre, of Louis XIV as an old man, a stiff, hierarchical kind of conception. Two of the busts around the room are by Coysevox: one of the Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, who died before his father at the age of fifty; the great sculptor shows him here as a young man of twenty, already a heavy, amiable character—and the other of the Maréchal Villars who was beaten at Malplaquet, but victorious at Denain. That of Colbert is by Coustou. In the corner stands a beautiful seventeenth-century table worked at the Gobelins—where roses and tulips are drawn in Florentine mosaic on a black ground.

The Salon de Diane was the State Billiard Room. Here the king "keeping all the while his air de Maître du Monde" played at a table upholstered in red velvet and gold fringe, illuminated by crystal chandeliers and silver candelabras. Orange trees in blossom always were placed in silver cases at the corners. Court ladies watched from tribunes covered with rare Persian carpets.

The ceiling of the next room, the *Salon de Mars* (109), is entirely devoted to war in various aspects and appropriately vivid colouring. (We shall find ourselves comparing it with Lebrun's more dramatic conception in the *Salon de la Guerre*.) The centre-piece is painted by Audran. The god sits in a chariot drawn by wolves, while in two lateral paintings by Houasse and Jouvenet Terror seizes the world and Victory is supported by Hercules. Over the four doors Simon Vouet has painted Justice, Temperance, Force and Prudence. The carved gilt stucco work is again by

Balthazard and Gaspard Marsy. Indeed this ceiling, and especially the stucco, is Versailles art at its best and most gorgeous—or its worst? There are heavy garlands of oak leaves and wonderful trophies in the corners, one recalling a victory of French troops over Turks in Hungary in 1664—another made up of naval emblems commemorating the establishment of commerce with India—the others tell of victory over Holland, Germany and Spain. Over the cornice children are practising the arts of war, playing with lions and ships and cannons, seated jubilantly on drums, or leading lions by chains of foliage, or treading over other vanquished children. This is our first introduction to that child life which the king desired to spread over all the art of Versailles.

The paintings in this room are interesting to us historically. There is a charming portrait by Vouet of the king at the age of ten, a small warrior in cuirass and helmet with floating plumes, seated on a white charger. The Seine, the Pont Neuf and the Cité are in the background. He is just the figure that every boy in the world would wish to be. So must he have looked; he was about that age, when he first hunted in the woods around Versailles. And near it hangs a large group, a painting for a tapestry, that gives us many of the people who moved about these rooms so grandly, and yet talked and tittered and grew tired of standing, just as we should. It is not a contemporary painting: it was done in 1715, but composed from portraits and living tradition. We see Louis XIV as an old dictatorial man disposing of an obedient grandson and surrounded by submissive relations. His face is evidently copied from the famous wax profile by Benoist. The occasion is the marriage of the Duke of Burgundy, that pure, incongruous figure, to the little princess of Savoy, who came like a breath of spring into Versailles and the king's gloom.

At that time they were children, and eventually they died young, leaving one son, who became Louis XV. Saint-Simon, whose pen spares none, gives a beautiful picture of

this Duke of Burgundy, pupil of the saintly Fénelon, who lived in Versailles but in a world apart, and who died within a few days of the young wife whom he adored. To-day we wonder how was such a creature born in that Court where few were pure ? What fortunes would have befallen the French dynasty had there been no Regency, and Louis XV had been educated by this father ? As for the little duchess we shall see more beautiful and characteristic portraits of her than this picture by Antoine Dieu. The stout figure to the right, strong as a tower, is "La Palatine," the king's sister-in-law, who married "Monsieur," the Duc d'Orléans, after the tragic death of Henrietta of England. She was a German princess who spent her days in writing to relations ; indiscreet letters sometimes. Saint-Simon describes brilliantly a scene between this lady and Madame de Maintenon after some of them had been intercepted by spies during war between France and Germany. She was a very proud woman and scorned the king's illegitimate children, and did not hesitate to box her son's ears before the assembled Court because he consented to marry the daughter of Madame de Montespan. Indeed she had a scorn for all the French—except the king, and for all Versailles, except its gardens. Those she loved. Her face and figure in this group, copied from a genuine portrait that we shall see in another room, admirably show this attitude. We can see her sweeping through these rooms, with her large profile in the air, scorning the glory of Mercury and Mars and Apollo, scorning her husband, and the Catholic religion, and France. But she was a good and honest woman at heart. We should have liked to meet her.

We turn from that picture dealing with a period of troubles and defeats to see the glory of France dramatically vindicated in another picture also posthumous ; painted in 1715 by Guy Halle. Genoa, having given ammunition to pirates who attacked French subjects, was obliged to make reparation. The Doge sent ambassadors to apologize, and these were received in great state in the Galerie des

Glaces on May 15th, 1685. Here we see the king standing before his throne, a part of the famous silver afterwards melted down to pay for wars. This painting is a valuable record if for that throne alone. In this room and the next are carpets from the great French manufacture of the Savonnerie. We see a presentation clock, a marvel of mechanism, and two ornaments of bronze: one is a replica of Girardon's "*Rape of Proserpine*" in the Colonnade in the garden.

The Salon de Mars was one of the most magnificent of the whole suite and was often used for balls. The Abbé Bourdelot describes the dancing of the beautiful daughters of the king before ravished courtiers. Three times every week the king opened this whole suite of rooms to the Court and to many others from six to ten. Large crowds attended, but all was conducted with the utmost decorum. The king was a most gallant host. When cards were played the royal family sat with the guests at small tables covered with green velvet; or the king, who loved music, would talk with the musicians who sat in marble tribunes on each side of the mantelpiece; and would show his delight, and chose the airs.

Madame de Sévigné in a letter to her daughter, dated 29th July, 1676, writes:—

"I was yesterday at Versailles. You know how things are done there. The King, the Queen, Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle, everything there is in the way of princes and princesses, Madame de Montespan, courtiers, ladies—in fact the whole Court of France assembles in the beautiful Appartement du Roi. It is divinely furnished. All is magnificent. One can move through all the rooms freely, and without suffering any heat. All is regulated by the game of *reversi*. . . . The king sits near Madame de Montespan. . . . I told her of Vichy; she spoke of Bourbon; and said that its waters instead of making one knee well had made both worse. . . . Her back is flat but indeed her beauty is astounding and figure slimmer by half without

spoiling the effect of her complexion, eyes or lips. Her dress was entirely of lace—*point de France*—her hair in a thousand curls with two long ones on either side of her face ; with black bows on her head and pearls and earrings of splendid diamonds—in short her beauty was triumphant enough to astound even ambassadors. . . . This agreeable confusion—without confusion—of all that is most select lasts till ten o'clock. If couriers arrive the king retires to read despatches and then returns. There is music to which he listens all the time. . . . At ten o'clock we mount *caleches*, and drive down to the canal where again there is music, and sail in gondolas, and come back to the palace where a *comédie* is acted. At midnight all is over."

Such was life in these "dull" and "grandiose" Versailles rooms.

The "Salon de Mercure" (110) was the State bedroom in which the king seems, however, seldom to have slept. On the splendid bed, railed off like an altar by a silver and marqueterie balustrade, his body lay exposed after death, the room then being turned into a *chapelle ardente*.

Again there is beautiful sculpture in stucco of children trailing garlands that are hanging round the cornice. The ceiling by Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne is an elaborate scheme in which Mercury is drawn in a chariot by two cocks, emblems of Gaul : and the blessings brought by that god into the world, Vigilance, Diplomacy, Science are figured in the corners. The caduceus appears among flowers, around bas-reliefs depicting legends of Mercury. On the walls of this room are portraits of men and women of the Court. Over one of the doors Blanchard records the birth of the king, where as a beautiful fair-haired child he is being given to a grateful, acclaiming France ; and over the other he shows the recognition of Louis XIV's grandson, the Duc d'Anjou, as King of Spain.

Here we first come to the tapestries that are among the chief glories of Versailles. Lebrun himself, or sometimes Van der Meulen or pupils, drew most of their designs and

they were woven at the Gobelins in Paris, the Royal Ateliers not only of tapestry, but of furniture, mosaic, goldsmiths' work and marqueterie. A special series was called "l'Histoire du Roi," a kind of chronicle play illustrating all his life and reign. There was a Grand Série and a Petite Série, and copies of each. Where to-day the tapestries are missing we see sometimes their cartoons.

It was from this room in 1923 that thieves, climbing up by a lightning conductor, stole two priceless tapestries. They were found eventually but cut up, and are now being laboriously mended. The ones we see instead are small, but very fine, especially that of the capture of Dole, chief city of the Franche Comté in December, 1668. Van der Meulen has indicated a wintry landscape: bare trees, the swollen river, distance and the cold. The figures of the king and officers and messengers, horses and peasants and dogs are full of real moving life. We shall see a beautiful small painting of this in the Musée. The other tapestry represents the entry into Dunkerque, also a long-realized ambition: the French had been obliged by Cromwell in 1658 to evacuate it, but on the marriage between Henrietta and Louis XIV's brother, the Duke of Orléans, Dunkerque was ceded to the French.

These tapestries of Versailles, apart from their intrinsic beauty—Lebrun's colouring has actually faded less, or more pleasingly in them than on his ceilings—are of value to the student of life. They are contemporary records, sincere and realistic snapshots of their day, so to say. We see the homely details of war, we hear the bustle and chatter of peasants and soldiers and regimental cooks. Or we watch the king's great gestures: standing superbly still under heavy fire while the horse of a Garde du Corps falls dead beside him; exposing himself in the trenches to full view of the enemy, as conspicuous with his wig and feathers as Nelson with his orders at Trafalgar. We see Louis XIV closer, we like him better portrayed thus, than officially in Coronation robes by Rigaud, or symbolically in Roman armour by Warin. Besides, Lebrun was a fine portrait

painter. These "Gobelins" grow on us. They are beautiful in their misty colouring. The spirit of life breathes through them as through a dream. A whole chapter could be written about the tapestries of Versailles.

Lastly, we come to the *Salon d'Apollon* (111), the throne room where the king received ambassadors. Until the Galerie des Glaces was built it represented the summit of Versailles magnificence. On the ceiling, by De la Fosse, Apollo, a radiant figure, very young, is seated in a chariot accompanied by the four seasons. But the glory of this room are the stucco sculptures on the ceiling. Winged nymphs almost life-size dance and uphold the central picture with coloured garlands festooned at their feet. It is the finest stucco work in all these rooms.

Here, in the *Salon d'Apollon*, stood the great silver throne, the hooks for the canopy of which are still in their places. We have seen it in the picture of ambassadors from Genoa. It was one of the marvels of Versailles. Over the doors are paintings emblematic of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and of Fame telling the king's deeds to the world. The doors themselves are signed by Caffieri and carved, like all the others in the suite, with stately arabesques that we shall remember when we come to the freer grace of Verberckt's and Rousseau's carvings in the eighteenth-century rooms. But this wood-carving is beautiful too, with designs of flowers below the monograms of the king and the insignia of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Even here, as everywhere in Versailles, is a wealth of imagination.

And so we have reached the throne—the king himself, who watched the building of these rooms even from afar, followed even from the trenches every step of progress, praising, criticizing, inspiring, working, so to say, together with the artists, and all working for the glory of France. He must have liked those proud, simple words written by the Seigneur Combes: "Italy must now cede to France the prize and crown held by her over all other nations in all that concerns architecture, beauty of sculpture and magnificence of painting. . . . Versailles has worked this miracle."

## CHAPTER III

### THE GALERIE DES GLACES

"MESSIEURS, LE ROI!"

"Non seulement il se faisait de grandes choses dans son règne mais c'est lui qui les faisait."

Voltaire.

**I**N the *Salon de la Guerre* (112) we come into the full beauty of Versailles—out of winter into spring. Windows here face south-west and a spacious landscape: there is light all round; and already the soft shine of mirrors—this hall is a prelude to the Galerie des Glaces, a part of the whole, the work of Mansart. If in the rooms we have left, the ceilings seemed overcharged, this one is so much loftier that all sense of heaviness is lost. Instead, we have a sense of wonderful proportion between the room and the size of its windows and arches, and the long vista seen beyond—and of a perfect harmony of line. Of colour too: the walls are panelled in marbles of pale green, and veined white, and mauve, enhanced by the glow of metal work.

But with this delicacy there is vigour. True, the decoration here as of the entire palace and the gardens was under the command of one man. But Charles Lebrun allowed astonishing freedom of execution to his artists. It was justified. As we have already seen, in no two rooms are the medallions and panels of marble disposed in the same way as if none could ever tire of finding new harmonies and fascinating contrasts in their colours. And in the case of wood and stucco, no doors or ornaments are carved alike unless symmetry or allegory require it. Throughout

Versailles is a fund of imagination exuberant and vivid as in a Gothic abbey.

For instance here, panels of green, outlined against porphyry by thin bands of grey, surmount the mirrors. On these the king's monogram is placed above palms and foliage wrought in gold, but by a delightful whim the delicate sprays start from a cloven foot. They are surmounted by garlands of oak and grapes and corn, and by masks conventional but strong and expressive and all different—two women's faces, an old man's and a young one's. And no two of the lovely flower-heads in the window arches are alike.

And as if in final rebound from too much delicacy to the harsh subject of the room, on either side of the simulated mantelpiece is a composition in dark uncompromising bronze, where two captive giants, a young one and an old, sit bound: their faces, their bent backs, every line of their bodies showing gloom and hopelessness. Between them as a sign of the strength that broke their strength—perhaps again they mean Austria and Spain—is a lion's head. Below them in another panel of bronze sits History recording the king's deeds.

We must note the busts of porphyry around the room that formed a part of Mazarin's legacy to the king. Their pedestals and drapery are by Girardon, a sculptor whose best work we shall find in the gardens. The groups of war emblems are carved by Lespingola and Buirette from designs, naturally, by Lebrun; his hand is everywhere. The domed ceiling, however, of the Salon de la Guerre is the first the great man painted in Versailles. Charles Lebrun had been to Rome and was an enormous admirer of Poussin and of Raphael: he studied the latter from scaffoldings "with his nose against the canvas" but he never went to Venice. His drawing was always better than his colour. And yet here are some wonderful effects of green.

In the cupola, France is hurling lightnings from one hand and holding in the other a crowned picture of the king. Angels of victory surround her bearing standards and

palms and effigies inscribed, "the Germans chased beyond the Rhine," and the arms of the town of Strasbourg. In the spandrels are war, Bellona; and the countries concerned—Spain, Austria and Holland emblematically treated. In the corners are beautiful groups of helmets and shields, below flowers, cherubs, and the face of the sun-god surmounted by the king's motto, "Nec Pluribus Impar," which can be interpreted roughly "Rien ne l'égale."

The crowning beauty, however, of the *Salon de la Guerre* is the equestrian bas-relief of Louis XIV upheld by the bronze giants. Nothing more daring and incongruous in such surroundings could be imagined. For it is in plainest stucco. Sheer beauty justifies it. Who would wish to change it for the polished marble for which it was the study? We are told that Peter the Great, on his famous visit to Versailles in 1720, stood silent and amazed before it. It is by Coysevox: a presentment of Louis XIV in the full strength of life and power. Clouds are hurrying overhead. The wind is driving out his cloak. He seems irresistible. His horse dashes on and his enemies are helpless at his feet. What if Coysevox has given us an heroic legend rather than a portrait? He was not given to flattery, and all France saw her young king thus.

Besides, this *Salon de la Guerre* is on the threshold of the *Grande Galerie*—it was composed as a prelude to that epic of the king's deeds.

The *Galerie des Glaces* (113) is the crowning feature of the palace, the summit of its magnificence. Without it Versailles would still be very fine, but not unique in the world, not Versailles. To most of us the mere name, Versailles, calls up the vision of this endless shining hall, unparalleled—except outside by Le Nôtre's watery road down the centre of the landscape; they must be one in conception. And nowhere so well as from this archway of the *Salon de la Guerre* do we feel that first overwhelming beauty of the *Grande Galerie*. Because of its architecture or its decoration? Mansart's work or Lebrun's? Both. We feel the effect of perfect proportion—between its



LOUIS XIV  
Stucco in the Salon de la Guerre



immense length and its small width and height ; between the curves of the arches and the vaulted roof—and that of unity. Indeed in its grand way the decoration is simple, the whole made up of beautiful parts, but the parts subordinate to the whole, with no ornament too much, no colour too predominant. On our right is an endless succession of arches in profile, with slender panels of pale green and white. They frame the windows. To our left is a long, silvery wall sheeted with arched mirrors only. We get, almost, an impression of no colour—only a long shimmer of light. Only the roof springing from a band of gold very richly embossed presents a show of tints : a dim effect, chiefly blue and purple, it might be old tapestry spread overhead.

The king had from the first intended to build a *galerie*. It was a feature common in châteaux—a kind of Salle des Pas Perdus. At Versailles it would be an assembling-place where all could meet and talk and watch the procession of the king or queen, a place for which no special entrée was necessary : a main street, so to say, in this town that was Versailles Palace, with its separate dwellings, its theatre chapel and even shops.

The building was entrusted to Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the young architect whom the king had employed at St. Germain to enlarge the Vieux Château and make the Grande Terrasse. For recent models there was the new Galerie d'Hercule at the Hôtel Lambert and the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre. And further afield they turned to Italy. The Farnese Palace had a small one (probably the size of the later Petite Galerie of Mignard of which nothing now remains in Versailles). Just as the rooms in the Pitti Palace in Florence might be taken as types of those in the Grand Appartement so the Farnese gallery, in Rome with the ceiling painted by Carraccio, as its main feature, is model of the Galerie des Glaces. As model still more obvious and suggestive to Mansart there was the Sala degli Specchi, which Guiglio Romano, a pupil of Raphael, had built in 1524 for Ferdinand d'Este in the Corto Reale in Mantua. Here are mirrors opposite windows—but

smaller. Mansart improved on the idea. His are not mirrors only but exact reproductions of the windows opposite.

The site chosen was inevitably on the garden side of Versailles Palace, filling the space of Le Vau's terrace, and thus accentuating the monotony of the façade: but the king risked that.

Mansart began work in 1678, and in 1680 the Galerie des Glaces had so far advanced that the army of painters and sculptors who had just finished the Escalier des Ambassadeurs could begin their new task here under the command, again, of Charles Lebrun.

This very remarkable man was sixty at the time. He was never a divinely inspired artist, but was supreme in decorative work. His style had a broad splendour, with dignity. He trained the taste of Colbert and of the king. He must have had a striking personality for he became nothing less than dictator of all art in France during the wonderful years of 1660-1700. The greatest artists of the day worked under him at the Gobelins or outside. He had done much to improve their status, and his own mind was open and generous. As we have seen he who was above all a draughtsman gave free scope to De la Fosse an ardent colourist in the ceilings of the Appartements. His own activity was boundless and versatile. Besides his own enormous task, the ceiling of this Galerie des Glaces, he designed stucco ornaments, locks, chairs, candlesticks and tapestries—all the furniture for the palace; he drew the fountains, statues and parterres for the gardens; and he designed Court fêtes as our own Inigo Jones had done. Two thousand four hundred drawings of his are to be seen in the Louvre to-day. Though he had a brilliant career behind him it was but prelude to the opportunity now offered. Never had he or any artist decorated such a stage as Mansart had prepared. We can imagine the enthusiasm with which he and the other artists and craftsmen under him set to work, seeing it as a national glory and a glory to themselves.

With the two *salons*, the Galerie des Glaces measures 200 ft. in length, it is 35 ft. wide and 42 ft. in height. Seventeen great arched windows overlook the incomparable landscape outside, and these are faced by seventeen great arched mirrors of Venetian glass on the opposite wall. We seem to be in a great loggia, with a garden on each side.

Three hundred and six squares of mirror glass, very costly then, and imported from Venice, are framed in copper work by Cucci, whose locks we have seen in the Appartements. The windows and mirrors, surmounted by garlands in metal worked by Caffieri, are separated all round the hall by forty-eight pilasters of mauve Marbre de Rance against a white ground with green panels. The pilasters have bases of gilt bronze, the work of Tuby, and the capitals are in the "French Order" as invented by Lebrun at the request of Colbert, where the Gallic cock appears among palms and suns and the fleur-de-lis. The four alcoves in the centre contain modern copies of antiques, Minerva, Mercury, Paris and Venus. The cornice all round is of gold stucco compartments, enclosing crowns on a white ground and the chains of the king's Orders of the Saint Esprit and of Saint Michel. Over that, bordering the vault, are again shields and garlands borne by twenty-four groups of beautiful children carved by Coysevox, in various attitudes of careless or mischievous delight.

Among the most deservedly famous things in the Galerie des Glaces are the twelve sets of "chutes d'armes," war emblems, placed on the walls towards the two ends. They are the work of Coysevox, Tuby and other fine sculptors. In perfection of bronze, of design, and craftsmanship they are the finest examples of this art in the world. Each shield tells a different story: Hercules killing the Lemean Hydra, Amphitrite riding a dolphin, centaurs pursuing nymphs, winged muses blowing trumpets. We see horses quivering, dogs barking, eagles, crabs, oak leaves, fleur-de-lis and sometimes the head of Louis XIV as the sun-god, or delicately carved as on a coin within a wreath of laurels.

And all this decoration is unobtrusive, becomes simplicity

in the enormous space. Our first impression was right. Lebrun, who had been so Italian in the decoration of the State apartments, rises here to a purer height. Mansart's genius, or the king, or France inspired him. Nothing could be more beautifully, classically French than the restraint of the Galerie des Glaces. We feel from the first that arches, mirrors, walls, for all their beauty of marbles and piled riches of bronze and copper are but subsidiary to the ceiling, and not so much to the art of that—as to its subject. For whereas the Farnese gallery existed for mere pleasure, to delight the eye of a private nobleman, and so could show forth merely the loves of gods in Olympus, this roof was to have a nobler, more inspiring theme, one in which every Frenchman would feel a personal pride, the achievements of his own country, and his king.

It was not without difficulty that Lebrun obtained the paintings of the ceiling. Colbert, his faithful friend, was losing favour with the king. Louvois was gaining ground. And Louvois, whose jealousy extended even to the men Colbert supported, insinuated that Lebrun was too old for such a gigantic task and pushed the claims of Mignard, his enemy and rival (there was a feud over the establishment of the Académie). But the king's fidelity to an old friend and admiration for his work gained the day. The ceiling was entrusted to Lebrun.

In two days he had prepared an entire scheme of historical paintings grouped round the myth of Hercules: the more obvious legend of Apollo being barred by the Galerie in the Louvre. But the "Conseil des Décrets de sa Majesté" decided to give up all veil of mythology and tell the king's deeds in his own name; Colbert only enjoining that these be not too inflated and no foreign power be unduly humiliated. In one more day Lebrun had prepared a fresh scheme, a complete history of the king's achievements from 1660 to the Treaty of Nimeguen in 1678. It was accepted; only the descriptive commentaries being considered too laudatory were changed for simple statements by Racine and Boileau.

Scaffoldings were put up, stores of paint laid in and the work begun ; Lebrun executing the principal figures and leaving subsidiary ones to his pupils. Parts were displayed as finished to the impatient Court. Lebrun—the great organizer that he was—had promised that the work should be completed in four years and it was ready to the day. When the Court came back in November, 1684, from Fontainebleau the Galeries des Glaces, clear above and furnished below, was illuminated ; and all Paris and France, and soon all Europe, talked of it.

To-day this enormous *salon* should still be seen with lights below. Those who were present at the evening fête given in 1923 in aid of the restoration of the château, realized the effect of colours as dreamed by Lebrun, saw it more nearly as the courtiers did, glowing and beautiful on that November night ; after the long drive through the forests it must have seemed like fairyland. For us who only judge it by day its colours are obscured by time and smoke ; on State occasions three thousand candles raised high on girandoles used to burn below for many hours. Much beautiful work is practically lost. But we have a guide. Vassé, whose bronze work we admired in the Salon d'Hercule, made careful engravings of the entire ceiling, and they still exist. Indeed these should be hung permanently in the Galerie, as our model of the Parthenon stands in the British Museum to aid our comprehension of the Elgin marbles.

Never did artist have such a surface offered him. Lebrun found room for thirty compositions on this ceiling besides a world of trophies, draperies, garlands and muses. One theme runs through all. Everywhere we see the king. Did he deserve this prominence ? What kind of a man was he really ? We shall best understand the Galerie des Glaces and all Versailles if we know.

Louis XIV had two sides, the man and the king—and the king came first. As such he saw himself a divinely appointed intermediary between God and people. Some kings are. As such he was invariably benevolent, measured,

great; with an enormous patriotism and sensitiveness for France so that every Frenchman felt the honour of the country to be safe in his hands. He gave a prestige to all monarchy unknown before. Never through all the intoxication of youth and adulation and passion did Louis XIV forget what was due to the dignity of the crown. Hence the decorum even in his faults—though he never loved a woman as much as he loved France.

He could be hard and incredibly selfish in private life and considered himself placed above the morals of ordinary persons, but then all his subjects shared that view. It was he himself who set the limit to his will—a limit that touched every point of life—his duty as a king. He had an enormous sense of duty. He worked hard for France. Never for any hunting did he miss a Council Meeting, or neglect a State opportunity, or say foolish, indiscreet things or betray a State secret. As a child he was given to violent anger, but only three instances were noted in his later life that he gave way to it. This self-control, this sense of measure and dignity spread even to small things, to dressing, eating, ceremonials, precedence, and it must be owned that Louis XIV had little sense of humour. Englishmen made fun of the solemnity of Versailles, but then Frenchmen were profoundly shocked by the licence of Whitehall.

In person he was of medium height, not short as Thackeray says—five foot nine, I believe—and his carriage made him seem much taller. Though as a young man he was clumsy he so schooled his body for the sake of France that majesty and gracefulness seemed natural to him, and the Grande Mademoiselle says he danced “divinement.” He kept his body agile into middle age by constant exercise. He had the large Bourbon nose: contemporaries agree he was not handsome as a boy, and he was early pitted with small-pox; still, his profile was one to delight sculptors and Lebrun turns it to decorative use on this ceiling. In fact he grew “decorative” in a massive way—what we call “Grand Siècle.” You cannot separate him from the age of *le Cid* or *le Grand Cyrus*. He could look like a country

farmer or like a Roman Emperor. Perhaps because of his neglected, lonely childhood he seldom smiled, but when he did, the smile was winning, and his courtesy towards women was invariable ; he raised his hat even to a house-maid. Bossuet, in his funeral oration, mentions the charm of the king's manner. And yet his frown could drive a brave man to despair.

But what did he do for France ? France answers according to her last elections ! History has tossed him high and low. The retreat from Mons in 1914, the horrors of Bolshevism in Russia turned thoughts to him in a rush of favour. The publication of a new brilliant biography has revived the discussion. Let us forget socialists and nationalists, Voltaire and Michelet, and the panegyric of La Bruyere who knew him young, and the scorn of Saint-Simon who only knew him old. Let facts speak for Louis XIV, dated, undisputed facts, as set forth on this ceiling.

We begin with the entrance archway from the Salon de la Guerre, where Lebrun shows the Coalition of Holland, Spain and Austria against France. For the long roof he has chosen only striking incidents in the king's achievements. He is careless of chronological order. The central place of the ceiling, however, is given to the starting-point of the king's reign, when on the death of Cardinal Mazarin, "*Le Roi gouverne par Lui-Même*"—deeply satisfying news to a country tired of Cardinal Ministers and Regencies, of the Ligne and the Fronde : hungry for order and strong government.

Louis XIV sits on high, very noble and calm ; we feel that he would easily dominate any situation. (But then Lebrun is not only a very fine portrait painter, his mind was in sympathy with the king's. He had painted him from early youth. They were friends. In fact Lebrun interprets the whole spirit of the Grand Siècle as no other painter does.) Above the king are three Graces, almost obliterated. Vassé's engraving shows them full of beauty. From above a canopy the gods look down on him benevolently from Olympus. Life offers him its choice : perhaps

Lebrun had seen Raphael's "*Vision of a Young Knight*" now in the National Gallery in London. On one side are the pleasures and advantages of peace. France robed in blue embroidered with the fleur-de-lis holds an olive branch. The Seine is resting on her urn. Children are playing cards and dominoes; while Architecture is represented by arcades of a palace and Comedy by a child putting on a mask. There is Dance and Science. But the king is gazing at a winged angel who offers him a starry crown. She represents war and conquests. Mars points significantly to her. Angels blow trumpets of fame. Which will the king choose?

The other side of this central picture represents the neighbouring powers holding revel. Here Holland is the most striking figure in white and gold, surrounded by the attributes of commerce and wealth.

There are two more central pictures. One near the Salon de la Guerre shows again the famous "*Passage of the Rhine*." It was the chief event in all the king's wars and caused great enthusiasm. Prodigies of valour were performed by the young nobility before the king's eyes on that occasion. Unfortunately the colouring here is much injured by smoke; but we see plainly Spain clutching at the king's bridle in the vain attempt to stop his progress. The other central picture towards the Salon de la Paix represents the "*Fall of Ghent*," taken in six days. This is treated with an excess of mythology. It has been much restored, but Lebrun's colours are really beautiful; especially the blue intermingled with green in the robe of a woman on the left, and the purple of the fruit; and we like the laughing face of the faun holding up the wine.

There are two sets of smaller pictures facing each other. Nearest the Salon de la Guerre, and towards the window "*Le Roi arme sur Terre et sur Mer*." Here a great variety of figures are in full vitality. Vauban's forts are being built. Money is brought. Vulcan is forging cannons. Mars helps. We must bear in mind that the age was steeped in mythology; it was common language, no pedantry. Readers

of contemporary French plays and novels find it on every page. Opposite these, on the inner side, "*The king gives orders to attack four important places in Holland.*" Here we find the one exception to Lebrun's rule of painting all figures except those of the king mythologically. The king's brother, "Monsieur" the Duke of Orléans, stands next to him in blue. On the left is the great Condé in armour, and on the other side Turenne, in red. Here, as everywhere, there is a terrestrial and a celestial composition; and the earthly one of the king's camp is vivid and full of interesting detail.

Towards the Salon de la Paix on the garden side is the picture where "*The king decides to make war on Holland*"—again a parallel between peace and war. It faces another event of military importance, only exceeded by the "*Passage of the Rhine*"—the "*Capture of Franche Comté in December, 1672.*" We have already seen it treated in tapestry. It is known that four different sketches of this picture were submitted to the king, and though much injured by smoke it still presents a beautiful harmony of colours. The feat was performed under terrible conditions of weather; and the impression of cold is finely emphasized by a fire. At the feet of the king a figure holds emblems marked "Dole" and "Besançon," the chief towns of this country. Historically and artistically it is an interesting picture.

There are other military feats painted, besides the "*Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.*" Finally on the arch of the Salon de la Paix—corresponding with that over the Salon de la Guerre—we see the end, pictured in beautiful allegory: Spain breaking away from the Coalition. The Treaty of Nimeguen had been signed. France had gained her natural frontiers. Lebrun finished the record just in time. After that the period of defeats began.

And so much for the king's military feats. Again you say they were the work of others? But the most republican of students, if honest, must recognize from his letters alone that Louis XIV was behind Condé, behind Turenne and

Colbert and Vauban, behind the campaigns, the money loans, the treaties—back into every detail. Lebrun's ceiling is no myth. The stucco of Coysevox was right. It was Louis XIV himself, his heart that beat under the national impulse, that drove France as a wind to victory. He was not only king of France, he was France. No republic could produce that.

Then, grouped among these pictures are cameos and grisaille, and twelve medallions flanked by giants, with a record even more astonishing. For Louis XIV was not intellectual; his education had been shamefully neglected and he was no reader. He only had that fine French quality *bon sens*: or rather an unerring instinct of what was good for France. The greatest men were but instruments to be encouraged for that end.

Lebrun again gives the king an air of great dignity and beneficence where he "*Institutes Order in the Finances of the Country*," and where he "*Reorganizes Navigation*." He paints a wonderful record: "*Relief given during Famine*," "*The Founding of the Invalides*," "*The Establishment of the Observatory in Paris*" and of the "*Police*," "*The Abolition of Duels*," the "*Reform of Justice*," the "*Protection of the Fine Arts*" and the "*Renewal of the Alliance with Holland*," the "*Junction of the two Seas*" the canal across France to connect the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

And all this simultaneous with the wars, and the building of Versailles in the intervals of peace. All this in twenty years. Again you will say Louis XIV had the extraordinarily good fortune of being surrounded by men each supreme in his own field. He only made adroit use of them. But Voltaire says, "Not only were great things done in his reign but he did them." Saint Beuve says, "If good sense was all he had, he had a great deal of it." Louis XIV had it to the point of genius. This ceiling is no lie. A man cannot dazzle an unwilling Europe and give his name to a century, and be a fraud, even if he end in failure and his policy prove a mistake. Take away the panegyric, the



GALERIE DES GLACES



Roman armour, the perruque and high-heeled shoes ; take away the great men around him, Louis XIV would still be great.

But we must leave this ceiling. The rest of the hall, all Versailles, shows us another side of Louis XIV : not only the divinely appointed being with mystic powers, but the man. As if in reaction he was vehemently human. First and foremost he loved building. But when he loved a woman he was passionate and irresistible. Every sense was intensified. He saw more than other men and loved all beauty voluptuously. He loved music—he himself played the *viole*, and Versailles lived to the sound of flutes and violins. He loved the songs of birds and the flash of bright plumage. We shall see all over Versailles gardens how he thirsted for the splash of fountains. He liked the rich scent of flowers. We must remember, he had Italian blood in his veins as well as Italian training under Mazarin. He craved for luxury and splendour all around him, pageants and fine horses and carriages. He had "heroic health," walked, rode, hunted untiringly and danced all night. Always he needed space and woods and distances—for that he chose Versailles. And always subject to the needs of France, he needed to be building.

Think how he must have rejoiced over this hall, he of whom it was said, "Le Roi donnerait toutes les femmes pour Versailles." Imagine it decked out for some evening ceremony, soon after it was built, the great space of floor covered with delicate Savonnerie carpet, the curtains of white silk embroidered with the fleur-de-lys in gold, the furniture—it sounds incredible—of silver, chairs and tables, girandoles, vases and candelabras so richly chased that the metal, solid and fine as it was, represented but a tenth part of the value. What but the white of silver could harmonize with the vast sheet of mirrors ? Within great cases, again of silver, with silver stretchers to carry them, were orange trees, the king's favourite flowers. Ideal colouring, white blossoms and gold fruit among green marble and white and mauve pilasters ! Imagine it

in a blaze of light from thousands of wax candles so that jewels flashed below and Lebrun's colours glowed above and all was seen again as a fairy palace in the mirrors.

Imagine the air filled with music, stately dance and sparkling talk, and the excitement of great happenings the day before and the day to come. Great times and great people. No longer young as when the Grand Appartement was built, and yet a glorious assemblage, a meeting of great minds, one fire kindling another. As if Queen Elizabeth after the Armada—or we after the great war—had built a palace, and Wren had been there, and Shakespeare and Purcell and Nelson and Marlborough and Gladstone and Henry V all living at the same time. Life was magnificent to live—it must have been a glorious hour in the life of any man—spent in that Galerie des Glaces. To-day it is full of emptiness and silence; and we moving in it seem attenuated creatures.

But by day, in the later afternoon, when it is flooded with sunlight dazzlingly reflected, we can still capture the beauty that they saw; drink it, just as they did, with the scent of flowers and the ripple of fountains stealing through the open windows. Those great arches on our right still reveal Le Notre's incomparable landscape of water within marble rims and flowers and space. It still is pictured once more in the sheet of mirrors to our left—softly, as in water. It is still the palace of the Roi Soleil.

Through the centuries this Galerie des Glaces has seen great ceremonies. The first was in 1697, a ball at the marriage of the Duke of Burgundy with the little Princess of Savoy. James II and the Queen of England, exiles at St. Germain, were among the guests. Here too the Doge of Venice made reparation. The great silver throne was brought in. Soon after that it was melted down, together with the rest of the wonderful silver furniture—when the League of Augsburg was formed against France and Louis XIV needed money for new wars. Grief at the loss

of these priceless works of art hastened the death of Charles Lebrun.

In 1715 Louis XIV gave solemn audience here to the Ambassadors of Persia. Very detailed descriptions of this ceremony exist. Outside, in the Cour Royale, the Swiss Guard and French Guards were drawn up, wearing new uniforms. Down each side of this Galerie tribunes were erected in which sat ladies and courtiers, magnificently dressed. The Dauphin, a child of five, soon to be Louis XV, dressed in gold brocade with diamonds and pearls, stood near his great grandfather. The Duc d'Orléans, in blue velvet trimmed with Spanish lace, stood near, among Princes of the Blood and those legitimized. The aged king himself wore brown velvet with magnificent jewels. Among the official details a human note is struck. We are told that for all his unalterable majesty, his air of fatigue produced a painful impression. This was a few months before his death. He was weary.

We shall see Louis XV holding ceremonies of equal splendour; with his air of boredom, Burke will see Marie Antoinette passing through it with high feathers in her hair, "beautiful and glittering as the morning star." There will be a stranger, more incongruous sight when the Pope Pius VII, prisoner of Napoleon, in pontifical pomp will go out on the balcony to bless the people. In 1855 our own Queen Victoria was entertained here by Louis Philippe.

There came a tragic winter day in 1871. It was enough to make the Grand Monarque and Lebrun and Mansart and Condé turn in their graves, when after a resistance from France as heroic as their greatest victories, Germany possessed Paris and Versailles; when in this hall the King of Prussia, before Moltke and Bismarck and the German Princes, was crowned as Emperor of Germany. After forty years that deep stain was wiped out by Ypres and the Marne and Verdun. After struggles shared by Englishmen, after the greatest war in history, in the presence of twenty-six allied countries, a

magnanimous peace was signed in the Galerie des Glaces on June 28th, 1919.

Beyond the archway is the charmingly beautiful *Salon de la Paix* (114). Sometimes it was enclosed. A screen was placed against the entrance as when the silver throne was brought into the Galerie. We have little record of what took place in this room in the reign of Louis XIV, but it formed the introduction to the State Rooms of the queen. It was her card-room. In later reigns, Marie Leszinska, wife of Louis XV, gave frequent concerts here, when the choir of the chapel, or artists from Paris, came to sing. And here, still later, Marie Antoinette liked to give performances of music by Gluck, whom she championed zealously in France.

This room corresponds in every way with the *Salon de la Guerre* at the other end—with the same proportions and the same scheme of decorations translated into those emblematical of peace. The “chutes d’armes” just as rich and glowing, instead of piling up helmets and shields, give us instruments of music and the arts and the caduceus. The stucco work in the corners of the ceiling and the frames and over the doors is a rich carving of fruits and grapes and corn surrounded by a band of small wreaths and sprays on white ground, prophetic of eighteenth-century work. In fact, the oval picture over the chimney-piece that corresponds with the stucco of the *Salon de la Guerre* is an allegorical representation by Le Moigne (who did the great ceiling of the *Salon d’Hercule*) of Louis XV bestowing peace on Europe in 1729. Of what hung here in the reign of Louis XIV we have, curiously, no record. This is a charming composition: the allegory clear and the colour limpid and harmonious, as befits the subject. Louis XV, as a young and beautiful god brings an olive branch to a distracted, grateful Europe. But the room itself was finished and decorated under his great grandfather. We are still in the reign of Louis XIV. This room sums up the achievements pictured in the *Galerie des Glaces*.

In the four semicircular paintings round the cupola we see again the countries with which France had fought, rejoicing over peace. Over the entrance archway is Spain, to whom a small angel brings the olive branch. We see banners being furled and work taken up. We see here beautiful colours. Lebrun has excelled himself in his last work. We love the bold effect of the rose-coloured flag beside the dying red of the flames of war. Below a tree is a charming pastoral group of peasants dancing in Spanish fashion while a youth vigorously blows a curious little horn. Faces and attitudes are full of life and variety. On the side, towards the park, we see Holland also furling banners and going back to her commerce and fleet. Next to her Germany is looking up with rapture to the messenger of peace while her soldiers are drinking lustily out of tall glasses. In the fourth semicircular picture Europe—Christian Europe—sits enthroned between Justice and Piety. The fine dream of Louis XIV is realized. And, lastly, the cupola—whereas in that of the Salon de la Guerre France was hurling thunderbolts, here, in the same robe of blue embroidered with the fleur-de-lis, she figures Peace drawn in a chariot by doves that little gods are guiding and surrounded by Glory, Hymen and the Graces, Science and the Arts.

Nowhere on wall or ceiling is the king.

In the Galerie des Glaces we traced his history, keeping him in sight through wars and victories. Here in this room that shows the fruits, the apotheosis of that long effort, not Louis XIV is glorified, but France. As a recent writer points out finely, "the king might inspire and guide a militant France, but before France great, victorious and at peace, even the king gives way."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WORKROOMS AND THE CHAPEL

*“Les Rois vivent pour le Public.”—Louis XIV.*

AND, now, where was the spade-work done? Going down the Galerie des Glaces we notice on the mirror side two doors. Either of them takes us into the old part of the palace that Le Vau had surrounded with his great “enveloppe” into the Appartement du Roi, consisting of fine rooms overlooking the Cour de Marbre and the morning sun. The three on the central façade—the *Œil de Bœuf*, the Chambre de Louis XIV and the Salon du Conseil—were the most important. Within them monarchy worked behind the scenes throughout three reigns. They saw its final tragedy and downfall. We will follow the courtiers’ route and go first into the *Œil de Bœuf* (123), the famous anteroom, and while we wait look round.

It is quite different in style from those we have seen, and very large, 60 ft. long and 27 ft. wide, and opens on to the Grande Galerie by three arched doors, the one of mirror-glass never being closed. Another leads into a narrow passage and so to the queen’s rooms; two others open into the king’s dining-room on one side and to his bedroom on the other; and a small hidden one leads to the secret staircase by which tradition says that Richelieu fled to King Louis XIII on the Journée des Dupes.

The *Œil de Bœuf* is very beautiful, with its riches of gold subdued by soft light. In fact, we see devices to obtain sufficient light. Two windows have been pushed into one corner, the only bit of outside wall. It must have been to do justice to the famous frieze that the oval, the “Bull’s

Eye," was inserted just below the roof, so introducing light from the small Cour de la Reine. Only for the sake of symmetry was another one of mirror-glass identical in shape and size inserted over the chimney-piece. Even so, the light is almost dim all over the room. The magnificent chandeliers must often have been lit.

This suite, though the oldest in the palace, was the last to be finished, and some of it only assumed its present disposition and decoration as late as 1755. But even here—complete in 1701—it is a far cry from the sumptuous, rectangular heaviness of the Salons de Venus and Mercury. Already the eighteenth century is trailing in its freer movement and supple grace. Instead of marbles and pilasters and richly painted ceilings we have walls elegantly panelled with mirrors and white wood, with centres of garlands and shells carved in gold: and the vaulted roof is plain: infinitely better taste, more restrained, more French, against the riches of the frieze.

It is more intimate in style. The paintings are family portraits of Louis XIV, a replica of Mignard's in the Salon d'Hercule, of the Duc d'Orléans, the Grande Mademoiselle, Marie Therese, and the large mythological group by Nocret, ordered by "Monsieur" the king's brother, for his home at St. Cloud, where Louis XIV is figured as Apollo crowned with laurels, his brother as Dawn under the morning star; their mother, Anne of Austria, as Cybele holding the globe in her hands, the king's wife Marie Therese as Juno, and Henrietta Maria, widow of Charles I, as Iris holding a trident and a wreath of coral; Henrietta of England, the wife of "Monsieur," is charming as the Spring; the Dauphin is appropriately smug as Cupid. After all, mythology was the idiom of the day.

Above the wall is a charming band of sculpture with coins and the king's monogram.

But the crowning glory of the room, that for which the light of the *Œil de Bœuf* was needed, is the frieze that surrounds it carved in gold stucco on a gold trellis against white, and broken only by the two oval lights. On either

side of these, two youths seem to lead the children's dance. The sight of these children must have been infinitely refreshing in a room which contained more intriguing and unchild-like doings than any four walls in Europe. We have already noticed in the *Salon de Mars* and the *Galerie des Glaces*, and we shall see it in the gardens, the prominence given in Versailles to child life. On the table of this room we see why—in words written in the king's own hand on the margin of a scheme of decoration drawn up by Mansard—touching words from an old and lonely man. "There is something too solemn in all this," he says. "We must have childhood everywhere." So all day long, up in that subdued light, a band of children play, as it were through the ages, with dogs and birds and garlands, beating cymbals, driving chariots, waving flags—absorbed, happy, artless, as safe and far removed from the tourists of to-day as they were from cardinals and ministers, and place-seekers.

On the mantelpiece between two candelabras of *fleur-de-lis* in gold stands the bust of Louis XIV by Coysevox, the finest ever made. Its date is that of the completion of Versailles and the establishment there of the king's Government, 1682. Monsieur Louis Bertrand, in his new life of the king, speaks of it thus: "In this half-obscure *Œil de Bœuf* it is not in its right place. It should be in the *Salon de la Guerre* or the *Salon de la Paix*, at the extremity of the marvellous perspective of the *Galerie des Glaces*. . . . Louis XIV is forty-three. He is represented in Olympian majesty, in robust beauty, a little encumbered with flesh, but transfigured by the flash of thought, and ennobled by the radiant width of forehead. . . . It is shameful to see in our drawing-rooms of the aristocracy and middle-classes the perpetual statuary of Marie Antoinette, Madame de Pompadour, Madame du Barry, while this masterpiece—the image of France in her most glorious epoch—is ignored. This bust of Coysevox should be reproduced in thousands."

The *Œil de Bœuf*, partly because of its quaint name, is, after the *Galerie des Glaces*, the best-known room in



SALON DE L'ŒIL-DE-BŒUF



Versailles: but also because here the inner wheels of politics were turned. Here the more intimate Court gossip was related, and the latest official news from the front repeated, while the crowd waiting in the Galerie des Glaces, looked in through the open door at the inner circle, the élite of France and Europe, cardinals, archbishops, ambassadors, dukes, peers, governors of provinces and parliamentary presidents, waiting too, but nearer to the sanctuary. On this last threshold of the king's presence a hundred political intrigues and personal ambitions were manœuvred and developed and outwitted by the cleverest brains in Europe—clever, unscrupulous, courtly. Saint-Simon's *mémoires* must have been fed from this room. Here courtiers discussed in low tones the prospects of the Regency, while the old king lay dying in the inner room. Here the Regent came in his dressing-gown in the middle of the night, when Louis XV, as a child, was ill. Through here Marie Antoinette, pale and with all her majesty dishevelled, fled from a mob of cruel women in the early hours of an October morning, and so missed the king, who had rushed in to fetch her by the private staircase down below.

The *Tableau de Paris*, written during the reign of Louis XVI, paints some of the proceedings in this room. "A great Swiss usher, square and colossal, is stationed there like a big bird in a cage. He drinks, eats and sleeps in this antechamber, and knows nothing of the rest of the palace. A screen separates his bed and table from the principalities of this world. Twelve sonorous words compose his vocabulary and his service. 'Pass on, sirs, pass on ! Gentlemen, the king ! Back, sirs, back ! No entrance that way, Monseigneur !' and Monseigneur slinks back without a word." The Comte d'Hezèques in his *Souvenirs d'un Page* tells us that this Swiss lived behind an enormous stove placed in the *Œil de Bœuf*. He ate there in the presence of princes and dukes. At night he made up his small bed in the Grande Galerie, and might consider himself the most magnificently lodged man in France.

Through a door opposite the entrance from the Galerie

des Glaces and near the angle of the courtyard, we come into the king's dining-room, the *Antichambre du Roi* (121). Little is left of its original decorations, only a fine frieze of the sun, and groups of gold stucco over the door of nymphs holding jasmine and roses and tulips, also a mantelpiece of marble. On the walls hang battle scenes and interesting portraits—of Henrietta of England holding the portrait of her husband, and the warlike Grande Mademoiselle, the king's cousin, in helmet and armour as Minerva, with that of her father. Here legend says that Molière dined with the king.

When Louis XIV dined in this room the Captain of the Guards was in command, and fourteen Guards lined the room with shouldered arms. One was placed near the king's plate, and another preceded the gentleman who served the wine. . . . It was an elaborate ritual which the public were admitted to watch. But Louis XIV used this room also for the hearing of requests from private subjects. Every Monday morning the gentleman in attendance covered a table with green velvet and placed an arm-chair for His Majesty. The Secretary of State stood on the left, and towards half-past twelve, after the Council and before Mass, unless he had already heard it, the king considered the communications, read each with great attention, wrote notes on the margin and indicated the Minister or Secretary who was to deal with it.

The *Salle des Gardes du Roi* (120) has a finely vaulted roof and is decorated with becoming simplicity. The cornice consists of attributes of war, worked in bronze gilt over white marble. The walls are hung with Gobelin tapestries, a painting of the "*Carrousel*" (a gorgeous equestrian pageant held in 1662 at the Tuileries) and battle scenes, and more interesting still, the original painting by Van der Meulen of the famous, oft-reproduced "*Passage of the Rhine.*" Cannons are fired and we get beautiful effects of colouring—the blue coats of the king and his suite, the blue river, and the blue infinite distance in the landscape, a blue sky up above where clouds are swept

off by the wind, and in the foreground a yellow-gold tree. Again we feel how deep and intimate was this artist's sense of nature.

Beyond this room is the Escalier de Marbre, the principal staircase of the palace. But we will come back through the *salle à manger* and through the *Œil de Bœuf*, into the *Chambre de Louis XIV* (124). We can follow all the movements of the king. Nothing can more emphasize this publicity than the curious way in which royal bedrooms of those days were used for ceremonies. Here he received ambassadors, ate his meals, gave audiences, and took oaths of office. Admission to the bedroom was not so difficult to obtain as to the Council Chamber. The bedroom was not only the centre of Versailles Palace, it was the symbolical centre of monarchy. Before the great bed, even when empty, princesses of the Royal Blood had to make a reverence. There is a curious tapestry representing a reception given by the king at Fontainebleau to Cardinal Chigi, the Pope's Legate. It was an important event, and to mark the high honour due to his visitor, the king received him in his bedroom, within the railed enclosure of the bed called the *ruelle*. Madame de Sévigné describes a visit to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, when she was in grief over her love affair with Lauzun, and says, so pleased and comforted was the Grande Mademoiselle that she received her inside the *ruelle*.

If majesty relaxed in the decorations of the *Œil de Bœuf* it stiffens once more here. This room is a mass of gold that is positively awe-inspiring, as if to sum up all the splendour of the palace. But the result is the least happy. Uneasy would lie any head that slept here, and we can sympathize with Louis XV's change into another room.

The walls have pilasters fluted gold and white, with elaborate capitals. The sun-god's face crowns the window arches. Where the bed stands were formerly three doors into the Galerie des Glaces and the arched alcove was cut as frame. At its summit France reposes on her arms, while angels of Victory blow the king's renown to all

corners of the globe. Over the doors are portraits of Louis XIV, Anne of Austria, and the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy: and on the mantelpiece is a charming, though realistic, bust of this vivid little person with energetic profile, by Coysevox, who has figured her so admirably as Diana, a statue now in the Louvre. Her early death helped to crush the old king, followed as it was within a week by that of her husband, the heir to the throne.

The two mantelpieces belong to the next reign; Louis XV who found the room cold, added a second fire-place, before moving into another bedroom, but as it was impossible to match the marbles changed the old one. We must note the two "girandoles" in the corners, and tall pedestals for candelabra. But the most interesting thing in the room is the uncompromising wax portrait of Louis XIV when he was seventy, made by Benoist. These effigies were much in fashion. Fine examples of them can be seen in our Wallace Collection. This one has faded, but must have been an astonishing likeness, and the old face lives, blood-drained, with nothing left but will and pride. We see in it something of a high-bred horse with panting nostrils.

From a contemporary picture in the rooms of Madame de Maintenon, where the king, already old, with a charming look of being father to his people, is receiving a number of very young noblemen into the recently established military Order of St. Louis—we see that the bed at present exposed is not the original one. The room is correct, but the bed there pictured is a four-poster. Louis Philippe, in his great work of transforming Versailles Palace into a national museum in 1837, had this one made after traditions and memories. The rich coverlet, however, comes from the old State bed in the Salon de Mercure.

In this room, blazing with gold, Louis XIV ate his semi-private meals at a small table before the central window. Here took place daily, year in, year out, the tedious, elaborate ceremony of the "lever." He had gone through

it all his life. At the appointed hour, eight o'clock, the chief valet de chambre drew open the shutters and the king's nurse, as long as she lived, woke him with a kiss. Then followed the various entrées—first of the Dauphin and Princes of the Blood and then of State Ministers. Here followed the equally pompous ceremony of the toilet: the shirt handed by one peer of France, the shoes by another—it was a sacred ritual. Louis XIV submitted to it, not from pleasure, but from reverence to the monarchy. There came the third admission for audiences; of business men, artists, architects: we think the architects with plans were always welcome. At last the king went forth in great procession to the chapel. In the evening, for undressing, the ceremonial was every whit as prescribed. Until the curtains were drawn upon the crowded day Louis XIV was never once alone. And yet, the Grand Monarque was always alone—wrapt in thoughts he shared with none. On this bed, in September, 1715, just two hundred years before the great war, Louis XIV died; saying shortly before he breathed his last that he was surprised to find death inspired in him no fear. He endured pain without a murmur. He gave wise injunctions to his heir, the little child who was lifted to the great bed, to listen and be kissed.

He gave instructions for the Regency, and sent for a plan of Vincennes Castle to give to the architect who was to alter it as an immediate residence for his successor. He burnt a number of documents. He gave audience to his nephew, the future Regent. He took a long time dying. His wife, Madame de Maintenon, forsook him, driving off to St. Cyr on the afternoon before he breathed his last. The priest he asked for did not come. Without a murmur of reproach, alone, uncomforted, the old king died.

Louis XV eventually found this room too large and solemn and cold and moved into another, where he died. But the Chambre de Louis XIV remained to the end the official State bedroom, where the ceremonies of the *lever* and the *coucher* were carried out. It was on the balcony

outside that Marie Antoinette appeared, pale and grave, before the mob of revolutionaries. A great room this, with great traditions. *Noblesse oblige.*

Beyond the king's bedroom, and with another door opening on to the Galerie des Glaces, is the *Salon du Conseil* (125). From here France was governed and Europe studied and cajoled, or fought, throughout three reigns. Day after day Louis XIV worked hard here for long hours with his ministers. On Sunday and Monday there was Council of State ; on Tuesday, Council of Finance ; Wednesday, Council of State ; Saturday, Council of Finance. Friday was his confession day. Thursday was nominally free, but really one of the busiest for private audiences.

Besides this routine work, time saw thrilling moments in this room. On the 16th November, 1700, Louis XIV summoned here the Spanish ambassador, and pointing to the Duc d'Anjou said, " You may salute him as your king." The ambassador knelt to kiss the young man's hand and made him a long speech in Spanish. The Bourbons have been in Spain since then. The king's acceptance of this heritage was a breach of treaty and of honour. True, it would not have been safe for France to have seated on a throne so near as Spain a nominee of the King of England : it was as essential for France as ever that there should be " No Pyrenees " ; but his action brought on a European war.

True, the *Salon du Conseil* in which it happened did not look then as we see it now. It was very rich with vases of agate and decorations of emerald, but it was half the size ; the part farthest from the bedroom being another room, the *Cabinet des Termes*—or *des Perruques*, because the king powdered his hair in it. Only in 1755 did Louis XV unite the two rooms into one and did it assume its present decoration.

This and the *Œil de Bœuf* are the most beautiful in the suite. These walls, too, are panelled with mirrors, but the wood-carving is far more beautiful. Much attention was being given at that time to wood-carving. In England

too. It was during those same years that Grinling Gibbons carved the stalls in St. Paul's Cathedral. How different is that work, deep cut, vigorous, English. Each is beautiful, but this is French. And the work in this *Salon du Conseil* represents the transition between that of Caffieri in the *Salon d'Apollon* and the carvings we shall see in a full flowering of grace and fantasy in the rooms of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. There are medallions representing war and navigation and scenes of peace, surmounted by trophies and garlands, and summed up in a shell above, and there are long narrow panels on which sceptres are interwreathed with fleurs-de-lis. All this delicate wood sculpture is by Jules Antoine Rousseau, though the frames of the mirrors are by the great Verberckt, whose perfection we shall see in later work. (On the other hand, the carving of the double doors leading into the king's bedroom show them to be survivals of the older, smaller room.) Here is still much majesty and symmetry, but already we have curves. We have but to compare this mantelpiece with, say, the rectangular one of the *Salon de Diane*. Over the doors are allegorical paintings connected with Minerva, wisdom here, being in much request. There is a beautifully wrought bronze clock on the mantelpiece that belongs to the period of Louis XIV and a bureau of the same period.

In the reign of Louis XV not only councils but society presentations took place here. In the case of ladies the proceedings, the length of train, the number of curtsies, the backward movement to the door—like the drawing-rooms at Buckingham Palace in the days of Queen Victoria, being exactly regulated. One of the famous occasions was that of the first appearance in Versailles of Madame du Barry. She was officially presented to Louis XV on April 22nd, 1769, and was late in arriving. The king, embarrassed, agitated, anxious, looked every moment at his watch, began sentences and did not finish them. Noting the crowd at the gates and in the avenues, he was told drily by one of the courtiers that all the world was anxious to have a sight of Madame du Barry. The hour was long

past. Courtiers hostile to her beamed with pleasure. The Duc de Richelieu, who conquered our Admiral Byng at Minorca and was chiefly responsible for her introduction stood glued to the window. The king walked up and down, and went also to the window and looked out into the black night. Nothing! He was just opening his lips to countermand the presentation when her carriage was seen entering the gates, and soon after, behind the Comtesse de Bearn, who had been paid 100,000 francs to present her, she appeared, resplendent in diamonds which the king had sent the night before, wearing a high headgear, the building of which had made her late in coming, and "habit triomphant" that eighteenth-century ladies called an "habit de combat." She was so dazzling, so radiant, that at the first moment her bitterest enemies could not resist her charm and beauty.

In this stately room a large white cat lay day after day before the fire on a red silk cushion. It was of "grosseur prodigieuse, très doux et très familier."

Here in the reign of Louis XVI on a hot 15th of August, 1785, the Cardinal de Rohan stood in full sacerdotal pomp, awaiting the passage of the king to the Chapel in order to celebrate Mass, when a thunderbolt fell. Summoned by the king, he was charged with complicity in forging the queen's name for the purchase of the famous diamond necklace. There was a violent scene. Marie Antoinette herself writes of it to her mother. From it we can image Louis XVI, unusually stirred and royal—the Cardinal bewildered, hot in his crimson robes that burned in the sun—and the queen, one storm of anger, pouring out words as sharp as hailstones. Until the miserable man, in all his pomp, was taken off to the Bastille. The *Affaire du Collier* became a *cause célèbre*. Public feeling ran high and it hastened the outbreak of the Revolution. We shall meet it again in Versailles and deal with it more fully.

Meanwhile, let us follow the daily work of State done here by king and ministers throughout three reigns. The Council over, and the *lever*, and the introductions,

the doors would open. A voice would cry: "Messieurs, le Roi!" The waiting brilliant crowds of people—place-seekers mostly—in the Galerie des Glaces, would range themselves, preparing their deep bows and *réverences*. The king, attended by princes and officers of State, would appear, give a quick, comprehensive glance around, and pass on, stopped at intervals by those saying "Sire . . ." in order to present themselves, or to ask for some personal favour, or a room in Versailles, or a day in Marly, the private château, the greatest honour at the king's disposal. The king would answer: "Je verrai!" his glance, an accolade; his frown, ostracism. Down the long "allée lumineuse," through the Salon de la Guerre and the sumptuous throne room, and Mercury and Mars and the rest he would pass on out of the gorgeousness and heaped riches of the earth into the sudden austerity of the vestibule. Then moods changed, the buzz of talking stopped. The great doors opened to reveal the whiteness of the chapel. The organ pealed.

Thus did the King of France begin his day.

The *Chapel*, the fourth to be built in the palace, was the last work finished under Louis XIV. The most serene and exquisite thing in Versailles was raised in the dark years of disaster.

The plans were approved and the foundations laid in 1689, but the wars following the League of Augsburg, and want of money stopped its progress, and it was only taken up again in 1698. It was to be Mansart's masterpiece.

Jules Hardouin was nephew of the François Mansart who built the Val de Grace and whose work Wren studied and admired when he came to Paris during the Great Plague of London in 1665. He was born in 1646 and his talent was quickly seen. His uncle allowed him to assume his name, so he became Jules Hardouin-Mansart. He was working at the Place Vendôme when the king commissioned him to build a château for Madame de Montespan at Clagny (near Versailles, but now destroyed), and two domes in a "bosquet" in the park. He made large additions to

the Château of St. Germain and built the famous Terrace there. In 1678 he received the post that had been vacant since the death of Le Vau, of Premier Architecte du Roi, and built at once the "Grand Commun," the servants' quarters just outside the palace, used now as a military hospital, and the Grande and the Petite Ecurie, now used as barracks. He modified the Cour de Marbre and left the façade of the palace facing the avenues almost as we see them now.

From this work alone we see that Mansart loved symmetry and simple, logical structure—what Inigo Jones describes as "solid, proportional to the parts, masculine and unaffected." But on the palace façade we see that he had suppleness and could be graceful. True, for Mansart's crowning glory we must look to the dome of the Invalides in Paris—not exceeded in dignity by that of St. Peter's in Rome: that was the end, the summit of his work, but in Versailles it grew grander, more harmonious, more satisfying—successively, steadily from the Grand Trianon and the "Colonnade" to the Orangerie and, finally, the Chapel. And that—he did not see completed. Mansart died somewhat suddenly in 1708 and the work was continued by his nephew and pupil, Robert de Cotte. It was completed in 1710 and the first Mass was celebrated in it with great pomp by Cardinal de Noailles on the 5th of June. The six side altars on the ground floor were only completed in 1747.

It was used many times for royal marriages, the most splendid being that of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI, to Marie Antoinette on May 16th, 1770. The Chapel of the Sacred Heart was built in pious intention by Louis XVI in 1772. During the Revolution the Chapel was used for civic ceremonies, such as a festival of agriculture in the year 4, but it was restored to Christian use in 1802.

So much for its outer history.

The Chapel is curiously placed, one part being incorporated into the north wing of the palace, so that its outer

view is not complete. But its nave soars free and high. It is the first thing we see coming from Paris, as if the king wished the ambassadors from all the world to know God was greater than he. And from the far end of the Grand Canal we see it taper upwards, slim and lovely and ethereal. Even the statues of saints and evangelists, nine feet high, poised round the edge of the roof in the worst style of Bernini, cannot spoil it. Besides, they and the trophies and the really lovely children on the summit raising branches of lilies and palm leaves to the sky, were richly gilt, when young.

The Chapel was only entered from within the palace. We will go in as the king did from the *Salon d'Hercule* to the upper *Vestibule de la Chappelle* (83). Here is no statue of the king, only allegorical figures of Glory and Magnanimity and the four quarters of the globe where the Gospel is preached. It is a large room built of stone plainly to match the Chapel and attune the mind. And yet, when we step out through the great door into the king's tribune, the Chapel always takes us by surprise, it is so spacious and so white and holy; with all Mansart's noble harmony of length and width and vaulted roof, essentially a beauty of architecture. True, he had built the *Galerie des Glaces* with the same just taste, but the structural beauty there is closely allied with that of painting and furniture and marble, whereas here there is so little ornament that architecture holds its own. Although he did not finish this, still Mansart could have truly said, "If thou seekest my monument, look around."

It was planned in two stories, the upper being the most important because used by the king, who only went below when Mass was said by a bishop. It contained a gallery for the Court and the royal tribune right across one end and the two corners of which protrude in semi-circle. These were formerly enclosed in wood and glass and called "tourelles." Here sat the king and Madame de Maintenon, so as to be private, almost invisible in their devotions. That there were similar "tourelles" in the

former chapel, now the Salon d'Hercule, we know from a contemporary painting in Madame de Maintenon's rooms.

Over the great doors—very magnificent with the king's monogram and beautiful locks—are carved the arms of France, and on either side, over simulated doors, the Presentation of Christ and Christ teaching in the Temple, a fine study of expressions, of startled faces of listeners and that of Christ full of inspiration.

A banister of "brèche violette" marble and bronze is carried round the gallery. The fluted columns with Corinthian capitals that support the roof divide it into fifteen bays. The large arched windows are of plain glass stained on the borders with the fleur-de-lis on a blue ground. Two side altars are dedicated to the Virgin and to St. Theresa.

Everywhere is whiteness. Only the altar and the surroundings down below and the organ up above it seem to glow with bronze and gold. Only on the roof do we see colour. And this roof, that seemed harmonious enough at the first glance, is the only regrettable thing in the Chapel. In the first place its composition is awkwardly planned, with a blank space of sky in the keystone of the vault just where there is most strain, thus leaving the cracks visible. Altogether the epithets so often thrown at it, even by Felibien and other contemporary writers—"theatrical," "poor imitation of the Sistine," "bad taste"—seem justifiable. The best part is over the altar where Charles de la Fosse (whose colouring we admired in the Apollo and Mars rooms) has painted the "*Resurrection*." The blues have been retouched, but we must admire the effective concentration of light on the angel near the tomb. The dawn is rising on him. In the main part of the ceiling Coypel represents God in glory, and here the figure of the Almighty is unfortunate in expression and undignified. The painting of clouds and angels, the whole thing is "operatic," Monsieur Peraté calls it "une absurde sarabande de jambes et de bras nus." Jouvenet's work is more pleasing in his "*Descent of the Holy Ghost over the king's tribune*." On the

ceiling we also see St. Louis at one end and a fine presentation of Charlemagne at the other.

The most interesting thing in this upper Chapel is the sculpture on the organ, where King David is playing the harp with instruments of music around him and cloisters of palm branches bursting into blossom up above—a whole wealth of fancy. Nothing so exuberant had so far been seen in wood-carving.

Nowadays concerts in aid of the restoration fund are given here and all the hidden life of the Chapel seems to wake. The gallery is filled and the nave below:—and the king's tribune, with those who can pay royal prices. The acoustic properties are perfect; voices and the words they sing float easily: in Louis XIV's day there was always a motet at Mass. Lulli had been director in the previous chapels, and the choir were carefully trained. They also sang secular music to the king in the evenings. Dumont was dead, but new Masses and motets were constantly composed. The music of Versailles was as national as all its other art. In the Bibliothèque de la Ville we can see some of the old scores: "Motets à deux choeurs pour la Chappelle du Roi, 1684," and "Motets par Lelande, Couperin, etc., 1697, pour la Chappelle du Roi à Versailles et à Fontainebleau." There is a whole collection of the music used in Versailles Chapel and by the Demoiselles de St. Cyr, bound in leather and embossed with the Royal Arms. Organists, singers, players knew that if the crowd of whispering courtiers in nave and galleries were only watching the king and Madame de Maintenon, they had one attentive listener. In that little *tourelle* to the left sat the old man, who really delighted in their music.

But the lower story of the Chapel has its beauties too. (Admission is by request to the very courteous *gardiens* in the entrance hall, the lower Vestibule de la Chappelle.) The floor is paved with marble mosaic. The altar rail is worked in bronze with the king's initials. The altar, too, is of marble and bronze work covered with gold. Angels and seraphims are in adoration on either side of the tabernacle

or float above ; and a panel shows Christ on the lap of the Virgin : all this is the work of Van Cleve, the artist of the frieze of children in the *Œil de Bœuf*.

More than ever down below we feel the whiteness ; its effect of unworldliness—it is whiter than ivory, warmer than marble. But then, the greatest wonder of Versailles Chapel is the stone of which it is made. It was a stroke of genius in Mansart and the king—in this palace that is a scheme of precious-tinted marble—to raise this holy place in stone ; akin in artistic daring to the stuccoes of Coysevox in the *Salon de la Guerre*. It is *lias*, carefully chosen from the quarries round about Paris, and of such fine grain that sculptors could work on it as delicately and as expressively as on wood. And that brings us to the carvings : the glories of French art. Not so much in the archivolt where angels full of life and sorrow are holding the instruments of the Passion—but on the sides of the rectangular pillars—small pictures telling scenes of the Passion forming a kind of way of the Cross round the church. A whole Bible history, a catechism, a doctrine is carved here. These are wonderfully done. They show an immense advance on the contemporary carvings, say, in the *Œil de Bœuf*. They might have served as models for all wood-carving of the eighteenth century ; it was only necessary to change religious emblems into those of arts and peace and love.

Near the altar we have pictures dealing with the Old Dispensation compared with the New. These are by Coustou. On a pillar to the right are carved the vessels used in the celebration of Mass, the tapers, censer, chalice, interesting to students of goldsmiths' craft, being exact copies of those used in this Chapel and designed by De la Cotte, and we see grapes for the sacramental wine and wheat for the bread. All are chiselled with exquisite grace and feeling. Already we see the dawn of the *baroque* style. On the pillar where Christ is washing the disciples' feet, the vessels and the pitcher are not quite upright. Everywhere is a wealth of imagination.

And yet Mansart's spirit breathes throughout and imposes dignity. All this grace and charm are restrained by their subject and its surroundings. Mansart realized that *rocaille* and *baroque* could never be architectural. Only in the details do we get exuberance and many curves, and the scheme as a whole shows purity and nobility of line. This white Chapel, the last thing built by the old king, that shone out as a beacon in the darkness of defeat, is the most classical, the most French thing in Versailles.

## CHAPTER V

### L'APPARTEMENT DE LA REINE

### THE GILDED CAGE

*"Grand air. Urbanité des façons anciennes.  
Haut cérémonial. Reverences sans fin,  
Créqui, Fronsac, beaux noms chatoyant de satin,  
Mains ducales dans les vieilles valenciennes."*

*Grands seigneurs pailletés d'esprit. Marquis de sèvres  
"Tout un monde galant, vif, exquis et fou,  
Avec sa fine épée en verrouil, et surtout  
Ce mépris de la mort, comme une fleur aux lèvres!"*

Albert Samain.

WE have now followed Louis XIV through the many parts he played as depicted in Versailles on wall and ceiling, and Versailles shows us that he only cared for two things deeply—France and building. To France he gave his service and a passionate, mystic devotion. But next to her, subject jealously to her claims, building fascinated and absorbed him. In the first moment of leisure, snatched at the camp or from the trenches, he would write directions to the builders at Versailles or Marly or Trianon. All else in private life was secondary. "Le Roi donnerait toutes les femmes pour Versailles," was one of the truest things ever said of him. He went on building almost to the end of his life.

At Versailles the building never stopped, and we are going back into the thick of it; starting from the Cour Royale. In 1684 we could have chosen an entrance into the palace on either side, through golden gates leading on the right to the Escalier du Roi, or des Ambassadeurs, and

on the left to the Escalier de la Reine. That of the Ambassadeurs was one of the great glories of the seventeenth century, with a fountain and precious stones and painting and statuary, but the whole thing was pulled down in the next reign. How it would have angered Louis XIV. After that, even ambassadors went in by the Escalier de la Reine ; and so must we. Not through golden gates, however, but dull-glass doors.

The vestibule in which we find ourselves is also altered. Le Vau's, built in 1672, was narrower, being restricted by the Chapel—the second one. Only in 1681, when yet a third was built, did Mansart give the vestibule its present proportions. Even so it is a cold, dull place.

But when we reach the bottom of the Escalier de Marbre we forget the lost glories that ambassadors saw on the other side, we stop involuntarily and let the beauty of this sink into us—the blending of the green and white and grey and violet marbles and a little black to enhance them, and all disposed in noble curves and circles and rectangles. The light is soft, coming mostly from above through a gracefully shaped loggia that was introduced by Mansart as late again as 1701, though there are also windows looking on the Cour des Princes. The staircase and walls, the loggia and roof are all in marble. No gold is visible below. Only as we go up do we catch the glint of metal on the bases and capitals of pillars, from Sphinxes and Cupids enchantingly carved, over doors and windows, and from a large shield with the king's monogram in a niche, and these are all of a very lovely subdued shade of gold. So are also the wreaths of laurels and symbols of glory surmounted by doves and torches. But the vaulted roof is plain.

Facing the loggia is one of those curious architectural pictures that the French call “*Trompe l'œil*,” such as we have seen in the Salon de Venus. This one is intended to produce the illusion of an open perspective and to be a pendant to the real loggia opposite. We find it the only dull thing in the young and lovely scheme of the Escalier de la Reine. Why not a mirror ? It would be more

beautiful and more useful. From the landing a door on the left leads to the king's Salle des Gardes and dining-room and the suite that we have seen ; that on the right leads into the "Appartement" of the queens of France : almost as splendid. But to-day we will go through another door opposite the king's.

It took him daily, as it takes us, into rooms—plain ones, quite out of keeping with the staircase, and yet where one of the most amazing of all the amazing dramas of Versailles was played. Here lived the secret queen, the unacknowledged wife of Louis XIV, Madame de Maintenon ; a woman whose character and influence on events have been endlessly disputed, and whose extraordinary career seems out of all keeping with her personality. Born in a prison, descended from Protestant zealots, married—after some adventures—to a brilliantly clever crippled writer of burlesques, she became after his death confidante and instrument to a king's mistress and eventually a king's wife. Within a year of the death of the queen, in 1684, Louis XIV married her at midnight in the palace chapel. Had they both been young she would not have attracted him, indeed, he started with aversion, meeting her only in her capacity of governess to his children when he visited Madame de Montespan. But she had beauty, of a fixed and regular kind, and a powerful intellect ; and he liked clever women, above all he admired good sense. He was fifty, at the age of common sense, and weary of the Montespan's storms, moreover deeply uneasy as to her part in the *Affaire des Poisons*. Calm Madame de Maintenon must have seemed a rock to which a man could cling. And she, for her part, seems to have married him for the sake of his soul.

She had long before become a Catholic. She seems with all good sense thrown in, to have responded to the great stirring of the inner life—the ceaseless soul-searching—of the seventeenth century. As Madame de Sévigné, her old friend, says, Madame de Maintenon introduced the king to regions through which he had never travelled. He, whose

religion had been made up of respect and forms conscientiously observed, turned to spiritual things.

Her life henceforth for thirty years was spent in these rooms (141-144) overlooking the Cour de Marbre, the usual "Anti-chambre," "the Chambre" (which always meant the bedroom), and the *salon*. Their disposition was altered by Louis Philippe in 1854, who thought Madame de Maintenon's rooms were on the opposite side where, however, Madame de Montespan's had been. But we know these are the rooms in which the king spent many hours, especially in the bedroom, the most changed of all. From their windows he must have feasted his eyes on the roof of the chapel, his last bit of building, rising higher daily. In the evenings his ministers worked with him here. Madame de Maintenon lay in her bed, in an alcove, and he from his arm-chair would often turn to ask her opinion. "Votre Solidité" he called her. Bishops and ministers and the world knew this. The exiled Queen of England at St. Germain paid court to Madame de Maintenon, and the little Duchess of Burgundy, who often brought her brightness to these dull rooms, with gay good nature or subtle tact, called her "Ma Tante," and some, like Saint-Simon, hated her.

The life she spent in these quiet rooms was not idle: she changed the life of the Court; was to some extent responsible for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes; planned and directed in every detail an admirable school for the daughters of noblemen at St. Cyr; approved with Racine the first performances of plays; worked at her tapestry and wrote many letters of advice to pious ladies and abbesses and bishops. Nowadays she would be chairman of committees and organize charity bazaars.

And hers was not an easy position. The king was incredibly selfish, but she had boundless tact and, at any rate at one time, great influence over him. Towards the end of the reign she herself gives an amazing account of her life from early morning (very early; she was at St. Cyr at six o'clock) till late at night, through endless ceremonies and business, and, worst of all, distressing scenes with him. Only

through her do we see Louis XIV's moments of weakness; only she saw him in tears, in storms of despair at the bad news that the couriers brought so constantly.

The rooms still seem under a shadow. They were sober then and are now bereft of all decoration. All except portraits on the walls. A fascinating assemblage of men and women, most of whom Versailles had seen, with whom the king had worked in the heyday of youth; in the great building years, long before he had known the pious Widow Scarron. We pass before them, just as they passed through his memory.

The first we see is Fouquet, as a young man, with a strange, haggard, feverish, haunting face; Fouquet, whose magnificence at Vaux le Vicomte had oppressed and teased the young king and first fired him to build; who was hurled down from meteor heights into disgrace—whose guilt is to this day disputed or condoned. (After all, recent *affaires* remind us that finance is not so much cleaner under republics!) Near-by is a very dignified Colbert, who is fair or dark, according to his wig. The king thinks of him with respect and satisfaction, and smiles grimly, remembering how Colbert had scorned Versailles at first. And yet, somehow, had found the money for it: and Versailles had outshone Italy. These were glorious days, when all Versailles was yet to build—and Marly and Trianon!

There is Couperin, who wrote the dances for the courtiers, and Lulli, the divine musician, the ambitious, selfish schemer, whom the Grande Mademoiselle rescued from the kitchens. There is Lerembert, maker of the gay children astride of sphinxes in the gardens. Versailles is full of children. And there is Ballin, the goldsmith—he came off badly! His best work was melted; but there are some delicate bronze vases of his on the terrace. And Charles Perrault, who must have been sore when Mansart was made first architect—and Le Hongre, who carved the statue of Air, on the Grande Terrasse, a lovely thing, even the Persian ambassador had admitted it.

Old friends all of them, of whom the king would tell

stories to his wife, as aged people do, or, sitting still, remember !

In the *Bedroom* (142), or Chambre de Madame de Maintenon, Lebrun's rough sketch of the head of the great soldier Turenne is easily the finest thing, a vigorous, speaking likeness, with high colour, full lips, bright eyes : beautifully, rapidly drawn. It is one of the masterpieces of Versailles portraiture. It makes a work by Mignard, the official society portraitist—a portrait of the infant Comte de Toulouse lying on a cushion—seem tame, and yet it is soft and charming. Rigaud uses gold and blue to finer advantage. It was Mignard who was chosen to paint the first official portrait of Madame de Maintenon in the next room ; obviously not with royal rank, but in the rôle of her own patron saint, Francesca Romana. This is a replica of the one in the Louvre. We are taken always by surprise to see how beautiful she really was. Mignard has given her the stately, sensible charm we see in hundreds of middle-aged French women dressed in their favourite black, to-day.

Here is Louise de la Valliere supposedly by Nocret, and a touching gentle creature, just as we imagine her. She has a black veil over her brown hair and wears a blue scarf. The face is soft and young. The eyes are large and heavy-lidded. In the opposite corner is a small portrait of her rival, the brilliant Athenais, Madame de Montespan.

As if on purpose to excuse the king, to show that no Valliere or Montespan could hold a heart that only beat for France, we are shown in small pictures the amazing many-sidedness of his work : founding the Observatory, or receiving a group of very young noblemen into the Military Order of St. Louis. Nothing could exceed his grave kindness : the youths kneel as they would to a father or a priest : it takes place in what was then the new bedroom, the Chambre de Louis XIV as we now see it. Only the pictures and the bed are different. Or the king is holding the great seal, as Lord Chancellor. He served thus from February to April, 1672.

There are many other interesting studies.

But we go into the third, the largest room, the *Salon de Madame de Maintenon* (143). Here she sits enthroned in a portrait by Ferdinand Elle, wearing a black mantilla over the head in the fashion of those days and called "Fontange." The child she caresses is her niece, Françoise d'Aubigné, afterwards Duchesse de Noailles, and near that stately portrait is a woman who detested her, who watched her every movement, who wrote spiteful letters about her, "Madame" or "La Palatine," wife of the younger brother of the king, and mother of the future Regent. This portrait by Rigaud probably served as study for the painting of 1715 in the *Salon de Mars*. Hers is a fine, shrewd face. There are two sides to every story and she had much to put up with. Small wonder if she took a secret revenge! Those letters were her outlet. And to be sure, most of them were intercepted and read, and so did not do much harm. Near by is the beautiful Princesse de Conti, said to be the image of her mother, Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and, like her, with more grace than beauty. She and Mademoiselle de Blois, both illegitimate daughters of the king, were dearly loved by him. They had high spirits. They let off fireworks under the window of "Monsieur" the king's brother, and teased him until he complained, and the king restrained them. They smoked pipes at Marly and, as children, were impertinent at table and giggled because the Grande Mademoiselle had a funny cough. They danced together, divinely, at the king's balls in the *Salon de Mars*. They were enchanting. Here is Fénelon, Bishop of Cambrai, who educated the young Duke of Burgundy—a saint who built another saint. For him he wrote *Telemaque*. Here is Lemoyne, who painted the ceiling of the *Salon d'Hercule*; and Rigaud, who has depicted Louis XIV, not at his best nor truest, but still majestically, so as to strike the world's imagination. Here is Boileau, who made the laws for poetry that our own Alexander Pope ridicules. And in this room, where *Esther* and *Athalie* were acted, is the portrait of Racine, who died of worry and grief because he had offended the king. In the presence of Madame de

Maintenon, probably in this her room, he and Louis XIV were discussing contemporary drama. In all absentmindedness he made a disparaging remark about the plays of her first husband, Scarron. . . . There was a terrible silence. The king remarked that it was getting late. Racine, in despair, made his last bow and went. Here, complacent, full to bursting in Court dress, is the loyal Dangeau,\* whose memoirs show us Louis XIV through different eyes indeed from Saint-Simon's. This is a fine portrait by Rigaud. In another picture he figures in a ceremony in the third chapel, the Salon d'Hercule. He kneels, facing the king, and makes his vows on being installed Grand Master of the Order of the Saint Esprit. We can see the angle of the castle and the *tourelles* in the tribune, such as were built again in the present chapel for the king and Madame de Maintenon. Here is Rigaud's magnificent portrait of Mignard himself, the rival and enemy of Lebrun, who literally worried Lebrun to his death, a man who enjoyed the most intellectual society of Paris and yet was devoured by jealousy almost lifelong, only obtaining the post of "Premier Peintre du Roi" when he was eighty-five. The indomitable pursuit of success speaks from his emaciated face and bitter eyes and thin lips. We turn with relief to his portrait of his daughter Catherine, the most beautiful woman in Versailles. Even Lebrun envied him this lovely model. Here is a replica of Mignard's "*Duchesse du Maine*," seated on a red cushion, blowing a soap bubble: with beautiful accessories, a spaniel, a green cockatoo, blue drapery, gold dress. Here is the Duchess of Burgundy and the Grand Dauphin and La Fontaine—all the people who met in this *salon* of Madame de Maintenon and listened to her music or watched the performance of *Esther*.

In the last room (144) is a realistic portrait of Coysevox: carelessly dressed, with a plain face, kind mouth and wistful eyes full of impetuous charm, such as we expect from a sculptor who made nobility shine even through plain faces—the sculptor of the great stucco in the *Salon de la*

\* This portrait has been moved into the first room.

Guerre of the Nymph with the Shell, of the Garonn the Dordogne, of all the finest sculptures in Versaille And here is Girardon, who carved the god and nymph and horses in the *Bosquet Apollon*, and Van Cleve, wh carved the children in the *Œil de Bœuf*. Here is Jule Hardouin-Mansart, very magisterial and noble, the ma who has arrived—who built the frame for all the worl There is Lebrun, who guided it. And here is he who can closest to the king's mind, the greatest of them all, th gardener, André le Nôtre, as aristocratic as a duke. He is Colbert holding an architectural plan. His face is fa this time and smooth and middle-aged. His forehead : knit, his face watchful. Here is Noel Coypel with sma face like an Italian's under a huge periwig.

And so we have met nearly all the makers of Versaille: in their perruques and brocades, who passed each other o the Escalier de Marbre, eager and preoccupied, with plan and sketches in their pockets. All dead before the king Often he must have sat thinking of them, while Madame d Maintenon from her bed watched him coldly, wishing h would go ; and the candle-light flickered on his magnificen profile, haggard and bloodless as in Benoist's wax effigy. . .

. . . Le Nôtre, Colbert, Lebrun . . . they had been youn together when the work was started and now they calle the king. . . . After all, the Parterre d'Eau was settled a last, Trianon finished, and Marly, and the Invalides, an now the Chapel. There was nothing left to build. . . .

And then perhaps the thud of horses broke the stillnes and the king would sit up sharply. He knew the sound c couriers from the front, bringing the latest news of th advance or the retreat, bringing questions to be answered, de cisions to be taken and then there—bringing work for France

Let us leave the old man, the great king. To the end, a long as he has breath, he will do his best for France.

We come back across the marble loggia into a room tha carries on the beautiful scheme of the staircase. We are in the *Salle des Gardes de la Reine* (118) or the *Salon de Marbr*

—on the threshold of the queen's rooms. We shall leave the men and their politics and the noise of wars and building. True, the Guards' room was always full of men, but they must have been the flower of the army, highly gentle and courtly to have been chosen as protectors of the queen. True, for a hundred years they only mounted guard, with their swords ready at a flash to fly out of elegant scabbards, and made their sweeping bows to the stately ladies who passed to and fro, dropping deep *réverences* in return. Life was a stately dance, life was controlled and beautiful in those days. Lace and perruques and pavanes enter into the soul. When the danger came, here in this very room, the Gardes de la Reine were no less ready to lay down their lives, than the men who fought at Malplaquet or the woman who went proudly to the scaffold.

The room itself is stately. Here again are marble panellings in the rich rose kind of Languedoc, and in soft greens and greys, and in pure white. Even the glass of the chandelier sparkles in a faint mauve tint. Here too the gold is only on the doors and in large groups overhead of the king's monogram and Cupids and wreaths. Only over the two pictures are rich garlands of oak leaves and roses, but these are all in a specially beautiful shade of gold.

And we must remember that in these rooms of the queen's we are back in the beginning, among marbles and stucco and heavily decorated ceilings, in the "Italian" period of Le Vau's Versailles. These were built at the same time as the *salons* of Venus and Mercury and the rest ; and yet are happier, flooded with sunshine from the south. And not as massive in decoration, having been modified in successive reigns. Not in the *Salon de Marbre*, though : hardly anything is altered. Fortunately ! For here the style of Louis XIV is at its most restrained and noble. We notice first the unity that is such a characteristic of French art. The two pictures on the wall are by Noel Coypel. One represents the birth of Jupiter and is in the pure style of Poussin whose follower Coypel was, in Rome. The other shows a solemn sacrifice being paid by virgins.

They are very pleasing where they hang—painted for this room, planned in colouring and shape and composition to suit it, to tone with the ceiling, subdued against strong. They were removed at one time to the Trianon, and only when they were restored to their present position was their charm realized as part of the whole.

The ceiling represents brilliantly the triumph of Jupiter. He is seated in a silver chariot and wafted by eagles through the sky and the signs of the Zodiac. He is attended by Justice and Piety and other mythological people. And the paintings all around picture his gifts; liberty as bestowed on the Jews by Ptolemy; corn as distributed in the time of famine by Alexander Severus; justice as administered by Trajan and laws as explained by Solon to the Athenians. We are always struck anew by the high moral import, the presupposed learning, the nobility of subject chosen in French decorative art as compared with those of their Italian models.

And then there comes a charming, original touch. Encircling the ceiling is an interrupted, simulated balustrade over which a crowd of spectators look down at the people in the room. Gaily dressed in fashions of the day, they are doubtless portraits of great people. Some are engrossed in watching us, some looking at each other, some are laughing and preoccupied, and one lady is sad over an absent lover. There is charming vivacity of near detail and a beautiful wide sky behind it all.

There are busts round the room. One is of Marie Leszinska by Coustou, showing all her plainness. But the keynote of tragedy is struck by that of Marie Antoinette. It shows her very young and almost beautiful, but does not hide her very high forehead: and it is placed significantly near the door where some brave gentlemen of the bodyguard fought and died for her.

Through that door we come into the *Anti-Chambre de la Reine* or the *Salon du Grand Couvert* (117), a long but nobly shaped room. It is connected with the king's dining-room by a small door and a narrow passage.

Here the queens of France ate their meals in incredible pomp, each dish, each drink being attended with almost as much ritual as the king's, and watched too by the public, anybody who was decently dressed being admitted to watch Royalty eat. Energetic people did the round ; watched the king as he ate his soup, were in time to see the queen eat entrées and hurried to the other side of the palace to gaze at princesses with desert. Marie Antoinette, the bird in the gilded cage, found this custom so intolerable that she abolished it. But then, Marie Antoinette was a revolutionary.

The room is rich in decoration. The ceiling is heavy with stucco ornaments of war in the four corners. But there is a lovely colour effect, a band of blue round the centre scheme and the emblem of the sun. Here in the time of Louis XIV was a picture dealing with Mars, but now we see a replica of Lebrun's famous "*Family of Darius at the feet of Alexander*"—one of his early works that first gave him favour with the king. This is surrounded by six cameos in bronze, all dealing with brave women of antiquity—familiar in those days of classic learning—Queen Rodogune at her toilet, swearing to avenge the death of her husband. (Rodogune was the subject of one of Corneille's most admired dramas.) Arpelia saving hers from his enemies ; Artemisia fighting on the ships of Xerxes ; Zenobia attacking Aurelian on the battlefield ; Clelie riding with her companions (Clelie was the subject of a novel by Madeleine de Scudery) and Ipsistrate following Mithridates to the war.

But the tapestries are the chief glory of this room, a part of the great series, the "*Histoire du Roy*," designed by Lebrun, executed by pupils and worked at the Gobelins factory. But whereas other artists gave rough sketches to the weavers, Lebrun painted his cartoons with enormous care ; every detail being shown, and every light and shade. In these four scenes Lebrun is at his magnificent best.

One represents the entry of the king into Dunkerque

in 1662; and another the capture of Lille in 1667: there are trees and hurrying clouds, a wealth of military detail of life and movement, all centred in the king, superb and gallant on his prancing horse. And two more intimate ones:—in which the king receives Cardinal Chigi, the Papal Legate, at Fontainebleau, in the *ruelle*, the railed enclosure of his bed. Here Lebrun—who always seems to be in closest sympathy with the king's mind—has caught his inscrutable far-seeing look, contrasting finely with the rather gross, but shrewd features of the Cardinal. They face each other—we can almost hear them talking courteously, whilst each watched the other: each with a hundred purposes and limitations and schemes at the back of his mind. Even if only to the student of costume and furniture this picture is of very great interest.

The fourth tapestry is one of the most famous, that of the king's visit to the Gobelins in 1662—his official act of patronage of Colbert's artistic movement. The king stands holding a cane, near him are Condé, the Duc d'Enghien, and the Duc d'Orléans, while Colbert is guide and Lebrun stands near. There are workers displaying their crafts, men rolling up carpets and carrying vessels, under the weight of which they stagger. There are pictures, frames and vases of gold and furniture of silver—and all are representations of those actually made for Versailles. A man climbs up to pull back a high curtain. Impossible not to see the influence of Rome, of Lebrun's idol Raphael, in all these human studies.

And all the colouring is lovely in the dim hues of tapestry. Whereas Lebrun's paint has merely darkened in his ceilings, here it has faded with beauty. Even the central panel, which is but a glorification of the Roi Soleil and the royal arms, is full of imaginative, lovely work.

Before we leave this room let us glance at the small table standing in the centre. On it the treaty of peace was signed in the Galerie des Glaces by nearly all the nations of the earth on the 28th of June, 1919.

We come next into the *Salon de la Reine* or the *Salon des Nobles* (116). Here, raised by three steps, stood the queen's throne. We can see the posts for the canopy, and it was encircled by a silver rail. Here was held the "Cercle de la Reine," when people were presented to her. We realize pitifully that the poor queens and *Dauphines* were all foreigners—from Bavaria, Savoy and Saxony:—there was the Spanish wife of Louis XIV, the Polish Marie Leszinska, the Austrian Marie Antoinette. All must have been nervous of the French at first, and often homesick. Taking them as a whole, they were astonishingly fine women; true to their husbands, beautiful as mothers, staunch as friends, above all, proud of being French queens. Full of pride. Smiling royally while the kings paid court to other women. True, there was not much history made here. We have left the rooms where things were done and built and fought. Here things were only felt. Here was the life of the heart. The women who sat on this throne cared very little about building, and only thought of wars in a personal way. But they did their particular work. We breathe a finer air. In those loose days it was of value to the country that a queen's life should keep up the standard of morality. Not one of them played false. A better set of people had the entrée here than on the other side of the palace. To gain admission to the "Cercle de la Reine" a woman, even a man, must have had a reputation for, or some claim to, virtue.

It is a very attractive room, intended to be stately. The ceiling is by Corneille and represents in the centre Mercury as the protector of Arts and Sciences, with clever women on the small panels around it: Penelope with her web and Aspasia with the philosophers and Sappho with her lyre. A beautiful jewel cabinet is exposed that was presented to Marie Antoinette: it is inlaid with copper and precious stones. It was presented in 1787, so she did not use it long. On the walls are again three very beautiful tapestries from the "Histoire du Roy," showing Louis XIV as a fair-haired boy being crowned in the

Cathedral at Rheims,\* and then being married to the Infanta at St. Jean de Luz. The small bride, charming for once in portraiture, looks up with shy pleasure. Again Lebrun has made Louis XIV live and be gallant, young and superb. A third tapestry shows another marriage, the renewal of his alliance between France and Switzerland in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. Here he is the king and the father of his people.

But is it that the tapestries are dim? Louis XIV is fading before a new and fresher dawn, the only other presence that could outshine his in Versailles. The throne is gone from this Salle des Nobles. That makes no difference. To half the world Versailles means Marie Antoinette. And whereas Louis XIV was intensely masculine, Marie Antoinette is vividly, provocatively, triumphantly, a woman. But with a personality as strong as his. They match. Never was a person more hated, more discussed, more maligned, more adored, more defended than Marie Antoinette. She and the Grand Monarque should have met and known each other.

We shall learn to know her intimately elsewhere. But in these grand rooms we see her as the Court did, on parade, hedged about by etiquette. She must often have felt intolerably sore and gone to the big windows to look away over the Parterre du Midi, gay as we see it now, and the high woods beyond: not thinking of them; nor of Schonbrunn, as her enemies said, but wondering how soon she could escape to see the Grotto at Trianon—and why the Paris people had not greeted her with acclamation—once they had been a “hundred thousand lovers”—why Fersen had gone to America; the real reason—until perhaps a laugh rang out and looking down eagerly she watched for a moment the Dauphin and Madame Royale catching butterflies or teasing goldfish; and then she would go back among the great nobles and breathe her vividness through all the etiquette, and say and do a

\* With this, in 1654, Lebrun opened the “*Histoire du Roy*.”

hundred things that were personal and individual and often irritating too.

Let us picture her moving through this Salle des Nobles with her wonderful sailing walk so that she hardly seemed to touch the ground and dazzling even women with her radiance. She was not really beautiful ; her forehead was too high ; her lower lip too prominent ; she only had bright colouring and blue eyes, but when dressed in taffeta and gauze she was compared with the Venus of Medici. An artist painted her portrait, inserted in the heart of a full blown rose. We hear of an elderly man who learned to hunt though it tired him merely to join the royal parties and to watch her from less distance. She dazzled Horace Walpole at a ball so that he could see no beauty in any other woman in Versailles. She made an ineffaceable impression on Burke, and on Chateaubriand, and above all on the Swedish Count Axel de Fersen when, laughing, she took her mask off at the Hôtel de Ville. Underneath this Court portraiture and the adulation there was truth. She did dazzle. She dazzles still.

But only when the dark days came did qualities totally unsuspected draw the strong genius of men like Mirabeau into her service enthusiastically : only then did her bearing and courage at Varenne impress Barnave, a republican, so to shake all his convictions and change his policy. And it was only at the end, confined in the horrible cellars of the Conciergerie, dressed in poor, half-ludicrous clothes, torn from her children, insulted by a mock trial, only then did she become great ; so great, so noble that Louis XIV would have passionately approved of her. Marie Antoinette may point not at the canopied erection in this Salle des Nobles—of the *émigrés* who forsook her—but to the jolting tumbril where she sat beside her executioner, as her throne.

Lastly we come to the *Chambre de la Reine* (115). Its ceiling had blazed with a golden procession of the Sun and Hours, and the walls glistened with marble ; but the decorations we see are in a lighter note designed for Marie

Leszinska by Gabriel. Verberckt carved the frames round the allegories of Glory and the Children of France, among whom is the Dauphin; and round the daughters of Louis XV; as well as of the beautiful mirrors between the windows. Other lovely carvings of his were destroyed under Louis Philippe. The stucco groups in the corners of the simulated cupola are still perhaps too sumptuous for a bedroom; on the other hand, there is no colour; only a lovely scheme of gold and grey with grisailles of Charity, Abundance, Fidelity and Prudence, by Boucher. The Austrian eagle was introduced among the arms of France and Navarre in compliment to Marie Antoinette. Tapestries of the story of Esther hang on the walls, also one of Madame Vigée le Brun's most admired portraits of Marie Antoinette: to us the least attractive, showing a too dominating, complacent personality too much in keeping with the sumptuous room.\*

Here Marie Theresa, wife of Louis XIV, died in 1683, a year after the Court was established in Versailles. The Duchesse de Bourgogne, as wife to the heir to the throne, occupied it after the death of the Dauphine de Bavière. Marie Leszinska also slept and died here, and had a small suite of rooms behind it, where she prayed and sketched and worked.

This *Chambre de la Reine* was of importance to the dynasty. Dauphins and princes were born here. At the birth of Madame Royale, when, according to an extraordinary custom, onlookers were admitted, Marie Antoinette nearly lost her life. The crowd was so great they stood on chairs, and she fainted; for the windows had been tightly closed, and only the king with all the vigour of his locksmith's arms was able to wrench them open. After this the custom was abolished.

Here every morning the queens of France held their *lever* and submitted to be dressed with a ritual almost as elaborate as the king's; the chemise being handed by an "ordinary woman" to a *dame d'atour*, and by her to a

\* Temporarily removed. Is to be placed downstairs.

duchess, and by a duchess to a princess of the blood before it reached the shivering queen. All is comedy and insignificant compared with the events of one night, the last that any Queen of France slept here, the dawn of the Revolution, the 6th of October, 1789. On the afternoon of the 5th, the angry, hungry mob had reached Versailles from Paris, crying out for bread and for the queen. Towards the evening rain began to fall. Some took refuge in the hall of the National Assembly (the Salle des Menus Plaisirs), others in the barracks on the Place d'Armes. But many still prowled about the streets and round the palace with the queen's name always on their lips, coupled with abuse and threats. She was advised to leave, and carriages were held ready at the park gates, but refused, saying that if there was danger her place was by the king.

For fear of irritating the mob the king had sent most of the troops away through the park to Trianon and Rambouillet, so that for some hours the castle was in danger, with only the bodyguard for protection; for Lafayette with his National Guard of twenty thousand men, whether on purpose or through ignorance, did not reach Versailles until midnight. Even then, it was towards three o'clock in the morning before the king retired to rest, and the ushers went through the great rooms announcing that the queen had gone to bed. The streets were patrolled. All seemed quiet. But at half-past five the queen awoke with a start, hearing sounds under her window. Her maid, opening the shutters and looking out, told her it was nothing: only a few women had been unable to find shelter and were walking in the garden.

The queen did not answer and lay down again, but after a few moments a sudden confusion of sounds was heard, a roar of voices and shots and cries: and this time the mob had broken in and were swarming up the staircase, hungry for blood, calling for the "Autrichienne" that they might wring her neck. A desperate stand was made by the Gardes de la Reine. A maid rushed towards them to see what was happening and at that moment Monsieur

de Miromandre, one of the officers, opened the door just wide enough to call out sharply: "Save the Queen!" and a second after fell stunned by a blow on the head; while his fellow officer was dragged out to the Place d'Armes and killed. Then the crowd poured in. But the maid had rushed back to give warning and the queen had hastily put on stockings, and a petticoat, and a shawl, and escaped through the door on the left of her bed, down the little passage, and through the *Œil de Bœuf* to the king's quarters. While he, who could see the crowd from his room, had come in utmost alarm to fetch her by a passage on a lower story. He only found the bodyguard making a last stand. He flew back and found her in his own bedroom, and soon the whole family was assembled there in safety for some hours only. This was the beginning of the Revolution.

We have anticipated. It is impossible not to—when Marie Antoinette is near. As well try to keep out the morning sun. But we have not finished with Louis XIV. His finest work still calls us.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GARDENS AS LANDSCAPE

*“O Palais, horizon suprême de terrasses,  
Un peu de vos beautés coule dans notre sang . . .”*

Albert Samain.

OF all the men who helped the king to make Versailles it was his gardener and architect of landscapes, Le Nôtre, who had the greatest genius, and no higher tribute could be paid to the nature of Louis XIV than the love André le Nôtre bore him. He used to throw his arms round the young king's neck when he came back from the wars, and through long life the love endured. There is no more charming vision to be conjured among the stately scenes of Versailles than that of the two old men wheeled side by side about the gardens in their quaint *roulettes*.

Through all advancement he remained a simple, lovable man. Charming stories are told of him: that on a visit to Rome, during a private interview at the Vatican he jumped up to kiss the Pope; that when ennobled by the king and asked what coat of arms he would assume he answered they were his already: two snails on a cabbage. André le Nôtre was born in 1613. His grandfather had been gardener to Catharine de Medici. Artists in those days kept much together, they intermarried and formed, so to say, dynasties, and he mixed with artistic people of all kinds. He had always a great thirst for beauty and that kind of universal taste that was the noble fashion of the day. He was a lover of bronzes and cameos and

antiques. We read that in 1682 travellers came to visit his collection in Paris, and in 1693, seven years before his death, he bequeathed it to the king. It was housed in the Cabinet des Antiques; while his pictures, including a Poussin and a Claude, were placed in the Petite Galerie.

He had already done fine work when Colbert transferred him to the king's service after the disgrace of Fouquet: thus making Vaux le Vicomte, so to say, a school for Versailles. In the course of his long life he transformed or created the gardens of St. Germain, Fontainebleau, Chantilly, St. Cloud, Meudon and the Tuileries. We owe to him the beautiful scheme of the Place de la Concorde in Paris and the Avenue des Champs Élysées. He went to England and designed the gardens at Greenwich and St. James' Park and Althorp. His style was large and noble and symmetrical, akin with Mansart's architecture. Everywhere he made use of nature and followed her lines, that of the Seine at the Tuileries, of the Castle and the valley at Chantilly and of the river at Vaux le Vicomte. He created a style for all countries. We see his influence in Herrenhausen, Schonbrunn, Peterhof. But his genius found its full scope only at Versailles.

Now the king's choice of this place for the seat of monarchy had astounded everybody. Saint-Simon says bitterly: "St. Germain, a lovely spot, with a marvellous view, rich forest, terraces, gardens and water lie abandoned for Versailles; the dullest and most ungrateful of all places, without prospect, without wood, without water, without soil; for the ground is all shifting sand or swamp, the air accordingly bad."

But from the first Le Nôtre seems to have shared the king's conviction of the possibilities of the site. Who knows but that he was responsible for some of the king's obstinacy? The two men loved the same things, large lines, shining spaces, wide horizons. For this they chose Versailles. If it were flat, why, they could make a fine effect of sky. They were free to push back horizons, and

to lengthen perspectives. There was room. We shall see the use they made of it.

Which is the best way to approach the gardens? I have tried every first effect; I know. On the south side, from the Cour des Princes. We come out into a sunny space between great white walls, in the angle formed by the south wing and the central block. A vast parterre spreads out to our left of flower-beds, purple generally, among fountains and clipped yews. It is edged far away by a marble balustrade and on the west by trees, but to the south a shining, golden space. There are wooded hills beyond.

Space, light, silence. These are the first and most abiding impressions of Versailles. It must always have been thus. Already the king's father felt it. He had aspired, as soon as the Dauphin could ride on horseback—be “en âge de majorité” to govern—to retire here alone, or with priestly directors, “talk with them of divine things and to think only of his soul and his salvation.” And where could he have found a better temple? It would seem to call us to such things, because of its space and light and silence.

It is enough for the present. We are only glancing at the landscape. We pass on under the queen's rooms, round the corner by the Dauphin's window and come out upon another parterre. Here are no flowers or trees, only two enormous sheets of water and on their rims lie giants. We pass onwards to the broad marble steps. It is the larger landscape we must see towards the west, the famous *Perspective*, so to say the climax of Le Nôtre's picture. And rightly so; planned so that the centre, the most important façade of Versailles should overlook it, that ambassadors should see it flashing from the mirrors of the Galerie des Glaces and all the world go home and talk about it as the noblest disposition ever made of a flat landscape—of earth and sky and water.

We stand on the low hill where once there was a wind-mill. Our eye—our soul is led over terraces below, down a smooth green carpet cut very straight and flanked

on either side by walls of green, over the liquid softness of a sheet of water long drawn out, and at last through a portal that might be the gate of heaven but is only two tall poplars into a space and infinitude, the open country.

No wonder there are always foreigners and young French *poilus* and old ladies gazing at that vista, on grey days and pearly days, and when the setting sun turns the long water into flame and the windows of the palace up above us all alike, as if the Roi Soleil were holding court. Indeed, he lives here. We have come deep into the spirit of Louis XIV.

True, only from the roof of the palace do we see, like birds, the unity of Le Nôtre's whole landscape, with this Parterre d'Eau as the centre and the Parterre du Nord on the right as pendant to the Parterre du Midi on our left, like arms of a cross, of which the longer portion shoots out to the west ; still, every line we see to be quite straight and every curve symmetrical. Now nothing in all France is so alien to the English spirit as the Jardin Français, yet no Englishman but feels its beauty here. In art we respond wherever we may be to what is sincere and national, and nothing in all France is so French as the gardens of Versailles. That is what the French *poilu* feels who gazes, awestruck, and the old French lady who sits basking in the sun and blinks at it. Not only because it is their own, an heirloom to pass on, but because it satisfies a craving deep in the nature of every Frenchman, Louis XIV felt it deeply, he who had known the disorders of the Fronde and the hurly-burly of war—a need for harmony and symmetry and law. We who have seen a fiercer war and lived in a more distracted world than ever he knew, we too are strengthened and soothed by the sight of it. The world needs order and straight lines. Besides, they also lead to vanishing points, to mystery. So must Le Nôtre have felt when by a stroke of genius he placed those poplars as a gateway. No other two trees in the world play such a part.

And so much for the landscape of Versailles towards the west, the flat landscape that Le Nôtre found there without woods or soil or water.

Let us for a moment forget the landscape and look at details, though indeed they form a part of it. For besides this mystic appeal and because Louis XIV was practical the gardens in their detail make a direct call to French patriotism.

The palace stands first on a small, plain terrace raised by a few steps like a casket on its pediment above the surrounding parterres. At its two corners on the west are vases. You might say they correspond with the victorious angels at the entrance. Under the windows of the Salon de la Guerre is one by Coysevox; enormous and nobly shaped on antique models. It represents France, with Hercules to help her, putting to flight turbaned enemies, the Turks, who were fighting against Hungary in 1664—while Spain, with the lion at her feet, recognizes the supremacy of France. The Vase de la Paix at the south corner, by Tuby, a naturalized Frenchman of Roman birth, commemorates the glorious Peace of Nimeguen, by which France gained her natural frontiers. Here again the king crowned with laurels sits enthroned. A figure holds the caduceus and the inscription, "*Pace in leges suas confecta Neomagi 1678.*" We see flags furled and the distaff and the attributes of Peace.

Immediately below is the "Parterre d'Eau," so called because of its first design, an elaborate interwreathing of flower-beds and small waterways. It had been more often remodelled than any other part of the gardens, and always in the direction of simplicity and good taste. At last, in 1683, the king left it as we see it, and must indeed have felt that it could not be bettered. He wished above all to look from his windows on to water, and what could be more adequate than the two large, beautifully outlined mirrors in which the castle dreams, or shines? Besides, they bring relief. They lend to the massive picture something soft and liquid. In our minds and memories the

enormous pile of Versailles is inseparable from its reflection in a rippling surface.

None of the three surrounding parterres ever had any trees to speak of. Saint-Simon describes them resentfully as a torrid zone to be traversed before the beauties could be reached, but the makers of Versailles never planned the gardens but as a continuation of the architecture of the palace, and the palace gains in grandeur by its isolation and its unshaded stone responds to every ray of sunshine.

Again the *peins* is reminded tangibly of France, of her own riches, this time. For on the rims of these great basins are bronze giants, recumbent—in harmony with the horizontal lines of the palace—representing her great rivers; and who does not love the rivers of his country? They are a unique collection, these bronzes, unique in an art in which the French have always excelled. Lebrun conceived the entire scheme of rivers and nymphs and children: here we find the same unity, for he was director of art in the gardens as in the palace. But the statues themselves were modelled by artists to whom he left much freedom, and cast in the arsenals of Paris by two Swiss brothers Keller. All are signed and dated.

On the northern basin at the farther end lie the Seine, and the Marne, both by Le Hongre, while Coysevox with more vigour carved the two great rivers of Aquitaine that lie nearer to the palace, the Dordogne, a beautiful creature with twin urns to represent the streams of the Dor and the Dogne—and the Garonne, who crowned with fruit and flowers and holding a rudder seems to be looking serenely at some distant vision.

At the southern basin nearest to the palace are the Loire and the Loiret, by Regnaudin. The Loire is figured as a robust old man crowned with reeds and holding a cornucopia. A crab and vegetables are near him. Double rivers flow from a rock, the Loir and the Allier. At the far end we see the Rhone and the Soane by Tuby. The latter is crowned with flowers and grapes and lies on a



GROUP OF CHILDREN



THE DORDOGNE  
Bronzes of the Parterre d'Eau



sheaf of corn. A little Cupid in attendance is pressing grapes—all in allusion to the land of Burgundy. We must remember it was not so long since Burgundy had become French. France was still celebrating her unity.

Besides these mighty rivers—suggested broadly by antique statues of the Nile and the Tiber—there are nymphs to give more graciousness and ease to the picture. They are dreaming, or driving little dolphins or caressing birds or choosing flowers that children offer. And to complete our satisfaction there are lovely groups of children, borne on the wings of a swan, looking at themselves in mirrors, or netting birds. The colour scheme is lovely. The marble on which they rest is stained here and there in violet and green. The bronzes themselves are marvels of subtle colouring. In fact, bronzes only show to full advantage out of doors, for there they seem a part of earth and air:—when trees around are bare of leaf, a part of their brown, tinged here and there with green or warmed with purple light. When May leaves are brilliant these bronzes seem to glimmer golden: seen at any angle from windows up above, or from terraces below, they are noble in attitude and outline. Always they seem a part of the landscape.

And no matter where we look beyond this parterre we see beauty; dark hedges with marble shapes outlined against them, and groves with fountains at the dim end where the sun shines. We hear water running. The Parterre d'Eau is one of the loveliest spots on earth.

And so much for the landscape and ornaments to the west. It is different when we turn towards the north. Here we must realize that Le Nôtre's space was limited. The town is very near. For that reason the more beauty of detail is lavished on us, so that the eye lingering on works of art seen close shall not look for deep horizons; and if it does, the illusion of space is to a certain extent created. But let us first look at the details.

At the north-west corner, not far from the great steps, we come upon a bit of forest life such as the river gods and nymphs around would know. Here is a fountain

receptacle, an upper and a lower basin of green and pink marble, and on the ledge are rushing lions wrought in bronze who have put their claws into a wolf and a boar and are tearing the life out of them. There are other beauties in this corner. Near the steps is Le Hongre's statue of Air. She looks up to the firmament, shielding her eyes, dazzled by space. Her drapery is blown out by the wind. At her feet is an eagle following her gaze and ready to fly upwards and she holds a chameleon in her hand. We are told that even the ambassadors from Siam were struck by the charm of this statue and stood for some time before it.

It is one of a great series of statues planned by Lebrun for the earlier and more elaborate Parterre d'Eau; the four seasons, the four elements, the four poems, the four temperaments, and so on, in the idiom of the day. These were placed afterwards about the park, chiefly on the north, the best, however, being kept for this side where they were visible from the Galerie des Glaces.

Nearer to the "Cabinet des Animaux" is Diana or Evening, conventionally conceived, with her bow, but moving with great speed and charm.

Next beyond the fountain comes Marsy's statue of Venus—very Greek, the most antique of all. These are the best towards the north, but then follows Europe, who, some say, is Louise de la Valliere—then Africa with much strength of individuality. She wears an elephant's head. A lion licks her feet. Her face has the negro type. Earth, nobly draped with a very fine lion at her feet, holds a cornucopia. Night holds a torch and an owl is at her feet. She is crowned with poppies and smiles mysteriously. Her gown is sprinkled with stars. Then comes the Pastoral Poem, the least interesting. They all flank the hedge along the lovely Allée des Trois Fontaines. All are much injured by exposure, but when first placed in the gardens they stood in sheltering niches.

At the corner where a path leads to the Fontaine de Ceres are some of the celebrated "Thermes" or terminal

busts copied from the antique. These represent philosophers and orators, but we shall see finer examples.

Along the lower path, the northern boundary of the parterre, we see in succession Autumn, America, Summer in mature charm, and then—finest of them all—Winter, which Girardon has figured as an old man bent with years and suffering and crouching over a brazier. The face is mutilated, but still touching. And at the next corner we come upon another highly original and imaginative work of Girardon's, the fountain of the Pyramides, where water falls from one basin to another and each in turn is upheld by playful dolphins and crabs and Tritons. You might call this Girardon's corner, for behind the Pyramide is a beautiful, rectangular fountain basin in which one of his most admired bas-reliefs shows Diana bathing with her nymphs, while the side groups are by Le Hongre and Le Gros. The statues continuing to flank the hedge beyond are Le Poème Satirique, Asia, Le Phlegmatique and Le Poème Héroïque—in which some see the features of Louis XIV.

And always does he make the most of his material. For instance, at the end of the Allée d'Eau that is cut through woods we see a shining space bounded by trees, but still a space—Le Nôtre's ruling thought.

This Allée d'Eau is one of the favourite spots of Versailles. It is affectionately known as the Allée des Marmousets.

For here, under the shade of trees, along broad grassy borders are delicious groups of happy absorbed children wrought in bronze, upholding fountain basins of pink marble, while they play on little pipes or caress birds or catch fishes. They are the conception of Claude Perrault, but were sketched by Lebrun and executed by Le Gros, Le Hongre and Lerembert.

On the left of the Allée d'Eau was the Bosquet des Trois Fontaines, of which nothing remains. On the right through trees is visible the stone wall of the Reservoir where the waters for Versailles are stored and in which the façade of the Opera is mirrored. Farther on is the

Bosquet de l'Arc de Triomphe, a space enclosed by trees. Little is left of its glory: only the group by Tubyl and Coysevox representing the conquest of Germany and Spain. And here is a charming copper statue, beautifully stained with verdigris, of a dwarf full of malice and joy that represents *Æsop* and stood formerly in the Bosquet of the Labyrinth; and there is Ariadne holding the thread to guide Jason.

We come back to the Allée d'Eau that takes us on to a large open space, chiefly filled with water. First comes the great Basin du Dragon, the leaden statuary of which originally the work of Gaspard Marsy, was restored in 1889. From out of the water magnificent fierce monsters rise and unfold their wings and lift their heads as if to snort revenge to the sky; while little Cupids are seated triumphantly on swans. True, lead does not attract so much as bronze, but when first made they were gilt and even now these figures assume tints of green and blue under the changing sky.

Our first view of the celebrated Bassin de Neptune is woefully spoiled by the houses of the town. We must go round to the other side. Then only do we realize the beauty of its shape and its grandeur; planned by Le Nôtre and Mansart as an amphitheatre with rising grass instead of tiers around and a sheet of water for arena.

It is here that the great water fêtes at night take place, when the fountains are illuminated and rise from twenty-two vases round the ledge, pipes—from over a hundred jets in pillars of fire to the height of the tall trees.

Because all the water system of Versailles more or less culminates in this region, because the chief reservoirs are near this northern corner, it was fitting that these most elaborate fountains of any gardens in the world should glorify Neptune.

Their statuary, only completed in 1740 under Louis XV, does it with much rhetoric. Neptune and Amphitrite sit in majesty, surrounded by Nereids, Tritons, dolphins, seaweeds, shells; it is a colossal group by Bouchardon. On

the right is a fine presentment of Ocean reclining on a scaly monster. The stone looks as if it would yield to the touch, so pliable and living seem the reeds and snakes, and the little hippopotamus which comes out to roar. On the left side is a statue of Proteus lying on a sea unicorn. On the other side beyond are very beautiful dragons being drawn by Cupids.

All around the enormous lake stand tall trees. The ring is broken only once, so that across the water we shall look up the dim aisle to its summit, where the palace shines ; never even in this his last spacious landscape, does Le Nôtre omit the palace of the king as centrepiece, as aim, as summit.

We must also look behind us at a florid, Roman piece of statuary under the fringe of trees. Like the palace it draws our thoughts once more to the man whose will was behind Le Nôtre and Mansart and Lebrun. It represents Fame writing the history of Louis XIV. Near him are Faustina and Berenice, copied from the antique—heroines familiar to the drama and learning of that day.

But then we leave the Bassin de Neptune and come up the gentle slope of the Allée d'Eau and notice perhaps fresh beauties in the children, the same groups of "Marmousets," but placed cleverly differently, and so with new aspects and outlines.

We come out across the Parterre du Nord that is the oldest, least changed, part of all the gardens. Flower-beds and lawns are as Le Nôtre drew them around two charming "Bassins des Couronnes," where sirens and Tritons in lead bathe happily, though they have lost their gold. We go up steps between two bronzes at the top, the "Venus Pudique" by Coysevox, and the Knife-grinder (Le Remouleur), an interesting copy from the antique in the Uffizi in Florence. They are lovely in outlines and attitude, harmonious with each other and their surroundings.

After that we must notice the bronze vases along the edge of the terrace ;—small, filled with flowers in summer and easily overlooked, and yet as beautiful in their delicate

way as the great bronze rivers. They are the work of Claude Ballin, the king's goldsmith at the Gobelins, who did most of the silver furniture that was afterwards so tragically melted down, and whose own portrait we saw in the Maintenon rooms. No two are alike. Their branches are composed of little grinning fauns, or sphinxes, or children holding chains, or resentful Cupids, or unicorns smiling at each other; they rest on the heads of lions, or rams, or men. Round the body of the bronze are scenes of pagan sacrifice, or the pursuit of nymphs, or merely wreaths of flowers, or coins, or the signs of the Zodiac. These vases are gems of imagination and life and workmanship.

And so we leave the landscape on the north—crowded with beauty of detail and yet conveying so much sense of space.

We are once more on the Parterre d'Eau, where the rivers of France are shining in new and richer tints. We pass *poilus* and school children and tourists and old ladies still gazing at the perspective to the west, where Le Nôtre, so to say, glorified real space, built a triumphal gateway to it, and coming to the south-west corner, near the steps, forget even his greatness for a while in delight over details. For here, against a background of tall trees, Lebrun, commander-in-chief of Versailles art, has placed a pendant to the other lovely pool upon the north, a scene of forest life captured for ever in wrought bronze. Here a tiger has his claws in a wolf; and a hound has seized a stag while he lifts his head to call the hunters: we can almost hear him calling and the panting of the stag. When the fountains are at play they live anew; water is spouted from their mouths; and water slides as a silver film over the edge of the pink marble.

In this same corner near the steps are lovely statues of Venus, or "The Dawn of Day," with a star on her forehead and, on the other side of the fountain "Water," with garments trailing.

And last of all we go back to the Parterre du Midi, where

we first started ; passing Ariadne, fast asleep. Her outline is lovely at the corner. Along the terrace are more of Ballin's bronze vases. Not to notice a single one is to lose a joy. We go down to the parterre between marble Sphinxes carved by Lerembert, with bronze children astride of them, laughing and pretty enough ; they were not conceived as a whole and are a little trivial in taste to our mind ; were it not that the king wished "*l'enfance répandu partout.*" They correspond in position and even in their horizontal outlines with the "Knife-grinder," and the "Venus Pudique" at the northern steps. We thread a way across the terrace through an embroidery of flower-beds. To our left towers the long white south wing of the palace, to our right dark trees. We hear the gurgling of a half-closed fountain—we never lose for long the sound of water in Versailles ; it comes from two marble basins and these are unadorned. Here are no elaborate fountains. There is no statuary round this Parterre du Midi and we know why. We do not need it. Here Le Nôtre had all the room he lacked on the north side. Here the eye can lose itself in space beyond. When we come to a long stone rail, we are on the sheer edge of the hill that is graduated on the other approaches by slopes and terraces. On our right are the steps of "Marbre Rose," where Musset wrote his famous lament over the "*ennuyeux parc de Versailles*" (that warms to praise before he finishes). To our left are the roofs of the houses in the town ; at our feet is the Orangerie Parterre and the Grille, with two gigantic gates on to the St. Cyr road, down which Madame de Maintenon drove early every morning ; and on the horizon the wood of Satory ; a line of smoke betrays a railway through it. Formerly it abounded with game of every sort and the king hunted there constantly, but partridges and pheasants have departed. Napoleon III established a large camp there, Mass was said on Sundays at an altar raised on drums. The Emperor held reviews there and gave luncheons to the officers in a tent covered with gold hangings, and to

this day the quietest corners of Versailles gardens vibrate with the gun-testing in Satory.

The large sheet of water, that corresponds with the Bassin de Neptune on the north, is called the Lac des Suisses, because the Swiss Guard dug it out between 1678 and 1682, and by so doing, removed the unhealthiness of what had been a swamp. But where the little boys sit fishing on the grass around were once great marble steps. On the left, and stretching almost to the Grand Séminaire, is the famous kitchen garden of the king, planted by La Quintinie, now used as a school of horticulture. At the end, just visible against the trees and no doubt to correspond with Guido's "*Fame*" at the far end of Neptune is Bernini's equestrian statue of Louis XIV, also the florid work of an Italian; it is the only big failure in Versailles.

We have seen how great was the Roman sculptor's influence in France, that his help had been asked for the reconstruction of the Louvre, and that he had been received in Paris like a prince. This statue was awaited impatiently for twenty years. But by the time it reached Versailles he had outlived his talent. It is conceived in his most *flamboyant* style, and French taste had improved and was dismayed. For Versailles had been a school of art, its tendency being towards restraint; all work that was chiefly bizarre and rhetorical, such as the Grotto of Thetis or the Labyrinthe being gradually eliminated. No wonder that Louis XIV ordered Bernini's tumultuous presentation of himself to be changed by Girardon into Marcus Curtius leaping into the flames, and placed as far as possible from the palace. We only see it as a white patch against trees.

This south landscape has a different character from that on the west—wilder, more artless. It has all Le Nôtre's large lines, but whereas in that other matchless perspective we feel the mind of man all the way—man losing himself in mystery—here we merely survey a charming piece of nature that is quite outside ourselves.

It is also a contrast with that towards the north. Here are no lovely details. We are too far away.

And yet there are always people standing at this rail; for the view is shining and large and satisfying; a sober scheme with no flowers, and no colour, except greys and greens, the deep green of orange trees below—only a few pomegranates have every leaf aflame—the grey of all the solid masonry around, and of the roofs of houses and of the still water and the green of woods. Mists often rise and add more distance to those woods that Le Nôtre was always cutting back to deepen the horizon.

The orange trees below in their big tubs look like troops of soldiers. We can almost see the king reviewing them. He did it on the day that Louvois died. It was soon after their quarrel over the Trianon window. The great war minister lay ill in the Rue de la Surintendance (now the Rue de Gambetta, the back of which is visible). The king was seen to look up constantly. We imagine that he was not altogether sorry to be delivered from Louvois.

Some of the oldest trees might remember that day, for oranges live to a great age. The "Grand Bourbon" dating from his time only died a year or two ago. They were very costly but the king had an enormous number, the nucleus of which came from Vaux le Vicomte at the time of the disgrace of Fouquet. He needed them. We have seen how many he placed about the palace rooms. He loved the beauty of their blossom. He loved their scent above all other. It would rise up here when they were all in flower and steal over this Parterre du Midi and right into the windows even of the Galerie, and he would breathe it deeply. They became a part of life to him.

In June, nowadays, when the trees are placed about the grounds, an exhibition of old furniture is held inside the Orangerie and the public can then see the wonderful solid masonry of its conservatories, vaulted like those of a crypt. The central one is 156 yards in length and 13 yards high. Even the shorter ones that come out at right angles are 114 yards in length.

Already Le Vau had built an orangerie, nearer to the palace and smaller—on this same side, for naturally it must face south. In those days of Italian influence an orangerie was the correct adjunct of a garden. But this enormous crypt underlying the Parterre and faced in solid stone with huge pillared porticoes and deep arched windows on the scale of the great stables or the Grand Commun is the work of Mansart. He had just built one for Condé at Chantilly. And his genius turned what was a caprice of fashion, a mere adjunct, into something indispensable—or that appears indispensable—to the whole scheme. We feel this almost acutely when at a distance beyond the Lac des Suisses, or on the St. Cyr road. From these points the Orangerie looks like the substructure of all Versailles, and Versailles looks gigantic as the Vatican, and the Orangerie strong enough to bear it, adequate, deeply satisfying, “masculine and proportionate.” Just as the enormous double stairways 60 feet in width would look ridiculous did they lead to anything smaller than the piled-up structure that appears to top them.

More, Mansart has accentuated the unity of Versailles as a work of art. Other features, even lovely ones like the Colonnade, might be obliterated without integral loss to the whole. Not so the Orangerie. It cannot be spared even from the picture. In its great sweep of line it unites landscape and palace. The Orangerie was the last thing, with the exception of the Chapel, that Mansart ever built; in austere beauty of line and nobility of purpose it surpasses all his other work. More, it is the finest thing in all Versailles.

And so much for the landscape that Le Nôtre and Mansart and the king drew to north and west and south, looking at the palace as they did it.

## CHAPTER VII

### LA CITÉ DES EAUX

### THE FOUNTAINS

*“ Un des plus beaux ornements de cette maison est la quantité des eaux que l’art y a conduite . . . Sa Majesté ordonna de s’en servir à l’embellissement de ces lieux.”*

Contemporary Journal, 1668.

**W**E see how large a part in each landscape of Versailles is filled by water ; the great Lac des Suisses, the Bassin de Neptune, and the Grand Canal. But then the makers of Versailles knew as well as we do that the most perfect beauty of earth and sky and trees is dead as a world without charity where there is no water. And for us those large, still pools that mirror sky and palace are enough. We English, thinking of Windsor and the Thames below, or Warwick Castle with its moat, like dreaming waters best.

Not so Louis XIV with his unconsciously Italian, Renaissance mind. He must wake waters into life ! Indeed to all gardeners of the seventeenth century the splash of fountains was as indispensable as the hum of bees or scent of flowers. The makers of Versailles especially had their eyes on Tivoli and Frascati, those great Italian gardens, built so to say round water that was there, or where rivers close at hand could be diverted easily to feed their rich cascades.

Whereas Versailles had no water at all. Saint-Simon says so ; and goes on maliciously to contrast its malodorous swamps with the noble flow of the Seine at St. Germain. Let us therefore realize at once that the waters we see sleeping

sion Melancholy with a bandaged mouth and holding book and purse, Antinous, a captive Barbarian, a Faun playing the flute, Bacchus, Faustina as Ceres, Hercules, Urania and Ganymede. At the bottom just where the path curves into the Parterre du Nord we find the replica of Coysevox' *Nymph à la Coquille*.

The nymph (legend identifies her with Madeleine Bejart, second wife of Molière, who appeared thus at the fête of Vaux le Vicomte) is waking. She holds a shell and half rises to listen to water that is flowing from a pitcher. It is well worth a visit to the Louvre to see the original of this—one of the loveliest compositions of Versailles, especially at this angle for which its horizontal curves were expressly drawn. Always we see the unity of Versailles as a work of art. Each statue was first made in wax and placed in its position for the king to judge before carried out in marble.

If from the Parterre d'Eau above we had gone on the left side of this "facile slope to connect the valley with the hill" as Walpole would describe it, if we had started from the Fontaine du Point du Jour we should have passed another set of statues, the gracious Poème Lyrique by Tuby, Fire by Dossier and seven copies from the antique: a barbarian prisoner, a Venus, Silenus, Antinous, Mercury, Urania and Apollo Belvedere. At the end of the curve and corresponding roughly in its horizontal outlines with the *Nymph à la Coquille* on the opposite side, is a copy of the Dying Gladiator.

And so whether by slope or steps we come to the great *Parterre de Latone*, that in main outline was always as we see it now, a horseshoe, called formerly the Jardin Bas, below the masonry of the first terrace. Seen by all visitors on the way to the grand canal it was from the first especially adorned with flowers and statuary, but the place of honour is given to the great fountain of Latona.

Here the brothers Marsy represent the mother of Apollo and Diana imploring help from Jupiter, who changes the inhabitants of Lycia into frogs as punishment for their cruelty.

Some would see in their metamorphosis of the Lycians

the conquest by law and order of the Fronde. In reality it carries out the mythology of Versailles summed up here into one sweep of landscape. For if this first great fountain celebrates the birth of the sun-god—then looking down the central vista we see the rising of his chariot from the ocean at sunrise; while up against the palace and behind us stood formerly the Grotto of Thetis where he came to rest at sundown. Perrault explains it all as a parallel with the king's own beneficent, active day of work. The beautiful figure of Latona is raised on high clasping her children. Below her in rings of soft bronze are the frogs and lizards and tortoises and human figures, within pink marble basins.

The fountain of Latona is very artistic in detail, and stands well in the landscape. But to judge its full beauty the waters should be in play in jets that cross each other symmetrically and in just harmony with the circular, graduated rims. Only those who wander in leisurely loving fashion about the gardens of Versailles learn to appreciate the charm of fountains playing. At first we English are content with the still water, or even the receptacles where so much art is lavished. We soon realize dimly that though the court mythology of the gardens, its outward ritual, centres round Apollo, though poets might describe King Louis XIV standing with his courtiers to watch the sun-set at the end of the canal as one sun calling greetings to another, still the real, secretly cherished divinity at Versailles is water. The artists must have dreamed of water, heard it splashing as they worked.

All the week gods and nymphs and fauns are listening and thirsting for its sound. In fact it is only on Sundays when the fountains are actually at play that we see the full meaning of their statuary: marmosets surprised and laughing to see themselves all wet, hounds spouting fury at the stags, nymphs trying to splash each other as they bathe. In the end we too will be charmed by the sight of water rising like columns to the tree-tops round Neptune, water crossed like swords above Latona—water curved as

a sickle, trailing as a comet, scattered in a mist. It is water, the element we know, but with a strange new life.

The flower-beds all ablaze with roses, and two charming smaller basins known as the *Lézards*, and the twelve great vases, in fact the whole horseshoe, the Parterre Bas and everything upon it is accessory, in attendance on the waters of Latona.

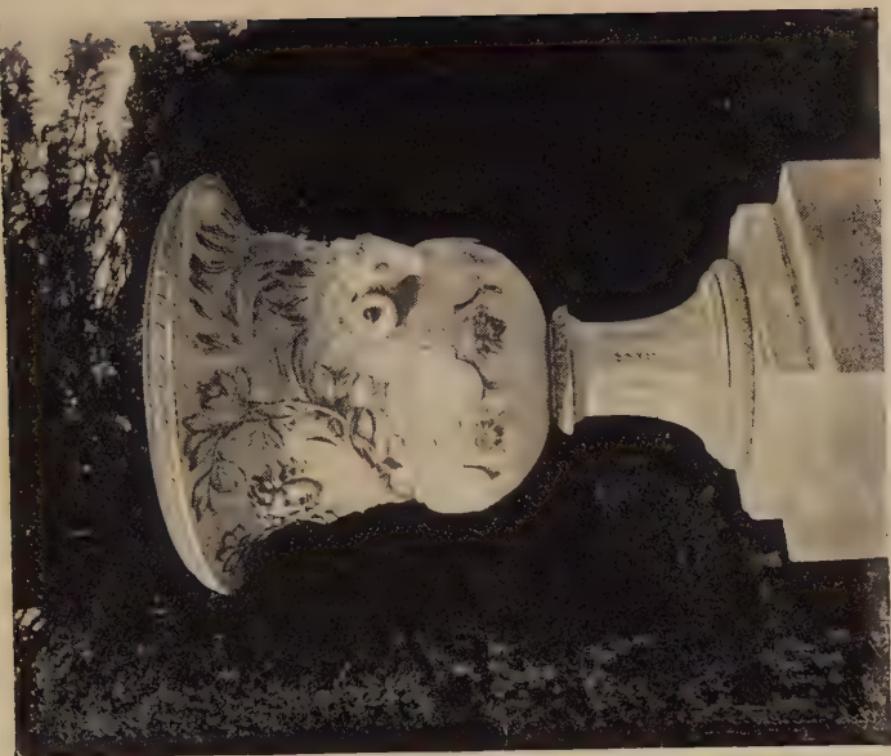
Each one of the magnificent marble vases should be studied. There is one picturing the childhood of Mars that is full of charm, and reminds us of the stucco in the Salon de Mars. Others are copies of the Medici and Borghese vases, executed by French students at the Académie in Rome. All are inspired from the antique, and yet all are French in spirits, "new thoughts in antique forms" just as Racine took subjects like Iphigenia and Phèdre for his dramas. The vases everywhere are among the most beautiful things in Versailles.

Along the western boundary stand the famous "thermes," perhaps the most classical things of Versailles, the most antique in form. And yet the most changed in spirit. The king had seen such busts at the entrance to Vaux le Vicomte. But whereas those were stiff and unpleasing, merely heads without bodies, the artists of Versailles so draped the lower part as to give grace and life to the fine busts above. They represent towards the north: *Ceres*, *Diogenes*, a *Faun*, a *Bacchante* and *Hercules*. On the south are the river *Achelous*, *Pandora*, *Mercury*, *Plato* and *Circe*.

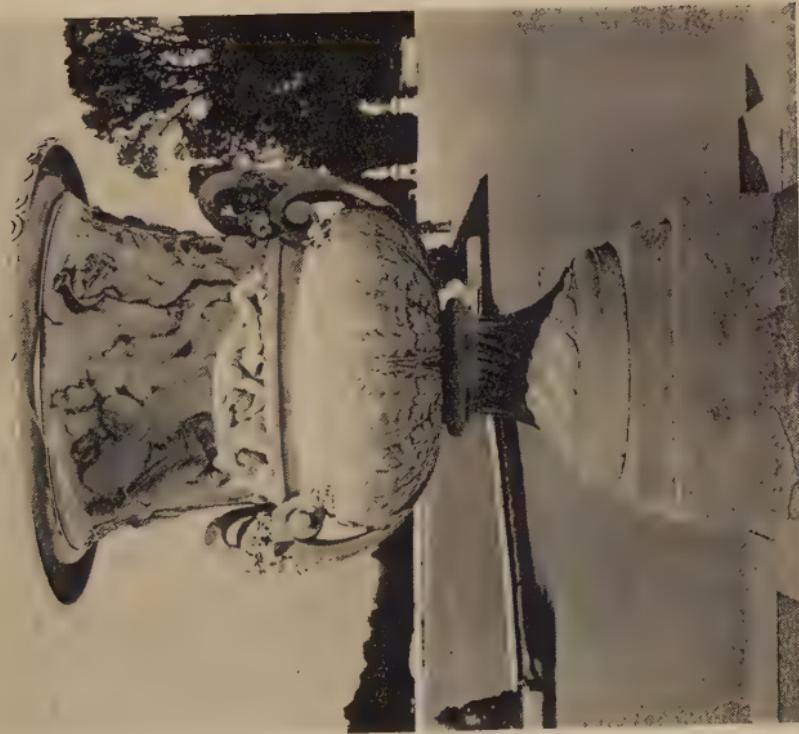
At the southern corner of the Tapis Vert stood formerly the famous statue of Milon de Crotone by Puget, a sculptor much under Italian influence. It is now in the Louvre. A Perseus too was put there by Louis XIV. In their places now are *Castor* and *Pollux* and a *Wounded Gaul*. While on the right at the northern corner are copies of the *Laocoön* and of *Papirius* and his mother.

The spot that we have reached, the entrance of the Tapis Vert, is a "point de vue" where Louis XIV impressively tells us to pause.

True, in his day all the fountains would have been



VASE DU SOLEIL



VASE DE LA GUERRE



visible. Still even so the view is comprehensive: behind us steps and terraces leading up to the white palace, to left and right deep aisles that end in shining space and, if it be Sunday or the jets are being tested, the flash of fountains of Ceres and Bacchus—and stretching out before us the smooth surface of the *Tapis Vert*, that should have kept its old name of *Allée Royale*, for it leads to Apollo and to water, and to space.

We will go down this central road and if we have chosen our day it will be October, and the dense mass of trees on either side tipped and brushed with gold and the paths strewn with leaves: and the rich sunlight slanting to the west so that the marbles on either side will shine with all their former radiance—so that we do not see the marks of time or tourists. First on the right stands *Fourberie* (Treachery) smiling. A fox is at her feet, while opposite on the left of the *Tapis* stands *Fidelity* with her heart in her hand. Farther along on the north side are *Juno* (an antique restored), *Hercules*, *Telephus*, the *Venus of Medici* and *Cyparissa*, suggested by Ovid—the faun is garlanded by flowers, and there is a lively look of sympathy between the two. Next to her is *Artemisia* with the ashes of Mausolus. On the opposite side, next to *Fidelity* is the finest of them all, *Venus* made for Cardinal Richelieu. The goddess is gathering up her hair as she comes out from her bath. Then comes a *Faun* and kid, and then *Dido* on the funeral pyre and an *Amazon* and a young *Achilles in Scyros*. And when we come out at the end are groups of statuary representing naval subjects with seas and rocks to face the Grand Canal. On the left we see *Ino and Milicente*; on the right *Aristea and Proteus*.

As for the vases in between the statues flanking the *Tapis Vert* even the plainest such as the first one on the right is lovely in shape or pediment or branch, or curve or rim; and no two are alike, even in their knots of ribbon or the modelling of their leaves. One is quite twentieth century with its plain vertical sunflowers, on another flowers and ivy are carved in great riches—while another with acorns

and laurels round a space where formerly was the king's monogram represents perhaps the height of decorative art under Louis XIV. In general the vases are among the loveliest features of Versailles. They are lovely without the flowers they are intended to contain. Their own colour blends with all their backgrounds: with the plain stone of the palace; with the brilliant green of beech close cut in spring; with a dark yew hedge; with autumn tints. Their shape is lovely in the landscape, full face or profile. We come upon them everywhere in walking through the park.

This brings us to the *Bassin d'Apollon*, the first sheet of water seen from the palace and from that distance merging into the Grand Canal. Here in 1670, before the Canal was ready, Jean Baptiste Tubyl placed the sun-god, for ever rising from the ocean, in a chariot drawn by fiery horses, to run his giant's course while sea gods on dolphins blow trumpets to announce his coming to the world. In size alone and in its harmony with the width and shape of the surrounding water the group is fine. When richly gilt, its general contour must have shone out nobly towards the palace windows. Seen close, we marvel at the life that vibrates in the muscles and tossed heads and breathing mouths of horses. We know that Rodin studied them. In their speed their manes fly out: you might hear the water hissing, while the god crowned with laurels leans forward but controls them easily.

According to the engravings of Israel Sylvestre it is roughly at this spot, then called the Lac des Cygnes, that the festival of the *Plaisirs des Iles Enchantées* took place in May, 1664, in honour, secretly, of Louise de la Valliere.

It was, so to say, the birthday of Versailles, a kind of pageant that lasted for three days, somewhat in the style of the twelve days' festival of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Molière, Lebrun, Vigarini, classics all, were its producers, but the gallant story was taken from the romance of Ariosto: and it was all the romance of the Middle Ages that lived again in a scene outshining all the splendours of the

Arabian nights. Fruits and flowers of all seasons had been gathered from all lands. Fire and water played their parts, fauns descended from the trees and all the audience too became actors, the king himself personating a knight, Roger, who has fallen under the spell of the enchantress Alcine, who dwells on an island, and from whom he is only delivered by the magic ring of Angélique, and Angélique was none other than Mademoiselle de la Valliere. In the "Princesse d'Elide," written for the occasion by Molière, these words were addressed to the king :—

" Votre cœur, votre adresse éclataient chaque jour,  
Mais je m'inquiétais de ne voir point d'amour.

Et puisque votre âme à ses traits est sensible  
Je triomphe, et mon cœur, d'allégresse rempli  
Vous regarde à présent comme un prince accompli."

The brilliant Court applauded. There was no stage scenery ; only the woods sparkled with new leaves, for it was the month of May ; and for background there was this perspective to the west where the island of the enchantress could be seen. But on the third day that island was consumed and trees and waters enveloped in a sea of flames.

And now to mark the spot the chariot of the sun-god rises daily from those waters ; and the horses breathe and live for ever. Nothing less heroic and irresistible could commemorate such feasting and such love.

Behind Apollo, passing through a grille that separates the garden proper from the park, we come at last to the rounded summit of the *Grand Canal*, the long watery road.

Venice . . . the *Canal Grand* . . . water. These were the images hovering before the makers of Versailles. Their craving was dim and childish and æsthetic for an element half-way between earth and air. And they must have feasted their eyes on this great liquid sheet. It must have seemed a miracle.

It measures 1800 yards in length and 62 in width and is in the shape of a cross. The length of its two arms

is 1500 yards. Le Nôtre made it between 1668-72, using all existing ponds and draining the swamps; but in the main its water comes from a distance. If we had stood here in 1692 we should have seen it gay with masts, we might have imagined ourselves in a small seaside town. For Louis XIV, as if to justify and excuse its beauty, turned the Grand Canal to practical use. In the first place its very name coloured even its pleasures. Historians will remember the interest felt in Louis XIV's time for all that was Venetian. Even when the king was prevented by diplomacy from actively helping the Republic in her war with Turkey, he allowed his noblemen to do so with ships and men and money of their own providing. (Has not France always helped other countries: Poland, the Stuarts, Hungary, America, Greece?) And the Republic of Venice paid great court to Louis XIV and one day sent him gondolas by sea to Rouen and from there by land: and gondoliers too. The king added to their number and soon a little colony was formed and dwellings built for them at the head of the canal. They are still there on our right, near the grille, small low houses with slate roofs; and still called La Petite Venise. Indeed a considerable staff was necessary, for the Grand Canal besides ministering to Court features furthered the king's practical interest in his own ships. Now the French navy had been greatly neglected under the regency of Mazarin; and Colbert had realized this weakness and seen with anxiety the fleets of the great naval powers, of Venice, Holland and England. So shipbuilding became very active under Louis XIV. After the expulsion of the Stuarts there was always the danger of invasion from England. And soon the king had models made for this Grand Canal of the big warships built at Havres, Nantes and Toulon. There were frigates, galleys, cruisers, yachts—a miniature fleet on the Grand Canal. Caffieri and great artists carved the poops and figure-heads. They had cabins and mirrors and fine furniture. The king and courtiers sailed in them. We can see in the Louvre the small fragments of them left—a prow in the

form of a mermaid and a stern with little dolphins blowing through shells, under a crown and the Royal arms. The largest was the *Grand Vaisseau*, built in 1685, and then there was *Le Modèle*, a smaller one, and the *Grande Galère*, built by Chabert of Marseilles, which the king boarded for the first time in 1668. *La Langeronne*, the most important launch (*Chaloupe*), was built by the Marquis de Langeron who had fought actively with the Venetians and studied their fleet and methods.

Even in later years under Louis XV the Grand Canal was utilized for experiments of explosives.

Chiefly, however, it played a part in festivities. The king and his guests would drive in their chariots down to the Bassin d'Apollon and there embark in the waiting gondolas rich with gold and silk while music would float across the water: there was never any pleasure without music at Versailles. Sometimes they would glide up the left arm towards the Ménagerie—one of the chief pastimes of the Court—where the king kept all the curious birds and animals that foreign potentates and travellers and governors of colonies sent him. It was the first of all zoological gardens. The festivals generally ended with fireworks. Always in all pageants shown to great guests from abroad, water played the principal part. The very soul of Versailles was its water.

Under Louis XV such a fête was given in honour of the Turkish ambassador, Said Mehemet, "un homme de grand mérite," who brought a suite of nearly two hundred men. Louis XVI gave one in honour of Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, and brother of Marie Antoinette, and another to Franklin, ambassador of the new United States—grateful for La Fayette. The last pageant that the Grand Canal remembers was one to celebrate the birth of the King of Rome, Napoleon's only son; when he and Marie Louise came in gondolas from Trianon for the Grandes Eaux, in 1811.

These were but dying gleams and now the Grand Canal sleeps. Of the beautiful Ménagerie—(the king made a

gift of it to the little Duchesse de Bourgogne, and she played happily at farm life there)—nothing remains but a few doubtful fragments. On its site, is a station for gendarmerie, and an engineering dépôt for bridge-building and captive balloons.

But we are taking a long walk on an October day and will leave the top of the canal—where boats lie waiting to be hired on Sundays and a restaurant outside the grille has rows of tables empty. We will follow the long water stretching out before us, still and shining. We leave all but a few walkers far behind and come to where the canal branches to the right. We too must go round; there is no bridge. And then the voices die away. We are alone; with every step, coming deeper into the past. What shall we find?

The water stops at the foot of double steps curving upwards to a terrace. Here should be courtiers helping ladies, stiff in brocades, out of their gondolas, and after bows and *réverences* walking slowly up the stairway hand in hand, and to the sound of flutes. . . . There is no voice, no presence. Only a long, silent palace all of marble, strangely built, looks down upon us through the trees. Trianon! The name thrills us like old music.

We turn away and by the other bank come round to the wider sunshine, the main length of the Grand Canal. Our eyes are on the far end, where water stretching through a gateway turns to air. It has drawn us since our first day in Versailles. . . . And long before we get there, the two poplars are seen as nothing in particular, and the infinitude is common land, fields towards St. Cyr, with a train puffing through them to Marly. We reach the end of the water and cross rough grass and come to the tall grille, and find there is no gate; and one of the two poplars seems in bad condition!

From these plain realities we turn to look again at the famous perspective—from the wrong end, from a point few people know, their vanishing point, as it were. What we see looks unreal enough in its beauty, a dim

transfiguration of straight lines and perfect rounds, of water flanked by walls of gold and overhead a vast, unlined surface of blue sky where the ghost of a moon is floating. And soon we feel a presence. . . . It is Le Nôtre, in Court dress and periwig. Naturally . . . we have come into the very heart of his dream. His glance sweeps proudly down the watery vista that he visioned when still it was a marsh. He smiles more proudly as he points to the far end, where the great pile rises built by the king he loved, Versailles shining pearl-coloured in the sun. It crowns the waters, it is one with them—Neptune, Apollo, the palace, the canal; they rose together at the flash of one man's will.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LES BOSQUETS

### ARMIDA'S BOWERS

*“O Versailles, o bois, o portiques,  
Marbres vivants, berceaux antiques,  
Par les dieux et les vois élysée embelli . . .”*

André Chenier.

BUT water was honoured in more intimate ways. Let us go back to the steps above Latona and look only to the right and left of the parterre and the Allée Royale. We shall see what appears like a dense wood ; but we know that it is pierced by avenues diverging star-like and that famous *bosquets* are hidden there symmetrically. The taste of a later age, even in France, ridicules their disposition. England was merciless. Pope says laughingly :—

*“. . . each alley has a brother  
And half the garden just reflects the other.”*

But Le Nôtre, like most men of genius, followed to a large extent not only the paths of tradition, but his own immediate predecessors, Jacques Boyceau, who wrote a *Traité du Jardinage* in 1638, and Gamboust, who had laid out plans for Versailles in 1652. Besides, for all Pope's jeers we had symmetry and *bosquets* in England too. Sir William Temple, in his description of Moor Park, says : “ the best figure of a garden is an oblong upon a descent ” exactly the shape of Versailles ; and many years later Horace Walpole, in his *Treatise of Modern Gardening*, mentions Lady Orford's estate at Piddletown, in Dorset-

shire, where there was "a double enclosure of thirteen gardens."

The architectural effect complained of was necessarily even more visible in Le Nôtre's day. Dearth of running water was not the only nightmare of Versailles. Stagnant pools and poor soil caused a lack of fine trees. The king had had to import elms from Flanders and oaks and beeches from all parts of France. In the meanwhile Le Nôtre planted his "charmillés" on either side of all the paths, hedges rising close cut like walls to a height of 15 feet, with branches growing freely as they liked above. These would mark the design, and yet leave the whole scheme of the gardens as clear to the eye from terrace, or the palace windows, as we see it on diagrams, or from an aeroplane to-day.

True, we prefer careless luxuriance of trees ; and we feel sure Le Nôtre himself would acknowledge the Versailles we love to-day more beautiful—even in all the disorder and neglect his eye would see—than in the trim splendour of his planning. But do him justice. Realize that the disposition of the very trees we enjoy is his. Le Nôtre planted and grouped for the future for us. His vision saw the deep shades of these *allées* that enhance the mystery of shining spaces at the end.

Meanwhile there must have been a crystalline, logical beauty in old Versailles. Each path led somewhere. Each path took the shortest way ; and the landscape was clear with the clearness of a day in March when trees are bare. Beauties of detail asserted themselves, and in Versailles they bear inspection. Whereas the ornaments in the famous Italian gardens like that of the Villa d'Este are merely decorative, chiefly stucco, fulfilling their purpose in the distance, but not bearing investigation, there is, or was, perfection in each detail in Versailles that deserved prominence. During the vigorous felling of trees under Louis XVI (to which they undoubtedly owe much of their present luxuriance) this became apparent. An eye-witness, the Duc de Croy, watching from the Galerie des Glaces,

was struck with beauties not visible before ; the statues and fountains assuming their right importance amid low trees such as Le Nôtre and Lebrun had planned for them.

As it is, hidden by rich trees, the symmetry of *bosquets* is lost and we need a diagram. The scheme is, of course, mythological ; the classics were law and prophets to the seventeenth century. Because the centre of the garden is given to Apollo, the two parts to north and south commemorate the four seasons that follow the sun's course. To our right, Spring and Summer ; to the south, Winter and Autumn. The paths leading from one to the other divide the garden on each side into an outer and an inner row of *bosquets*. Beyond the Parterre de Latone on the north or right we have the outer *bosquets* of the *Rond Vert*, the *Etoile*, the *Obélisque*, and the inner ones of the *Dômes*, the *Quinconce* and the *Bains d'Apollon*. While to the left of the Parterre de Latone and the *Tapis Vert* are the *Salle de Bal*, the *Quinconce du Midi* and the *Colonnade*, beyond these being the *Jardin du Roi*, the *Bassin du Miroir* and the *Bosquet de la Reine*.

It is a little difficult for us English people to understand the use of "Bosquets." They were bowers, cuttings in the wood, used in Versailles as outdoor *salons* for balls and concerts, especially before the Galerie des Glaces was built. But whereas the long central space of the gardens had a national use, was background for State pageants—as it were propaganda to impress foreigners—*bosquets* were purely for the delight and recreation of the king and his friends.

So far, we have emphasized the unity of Versailles, we have compared it to a poem in many parts, each part being necessary to the whole. But when we come to *bosquets* we must acknowledge them as adjuncts, side chapels. The art lavished on them was art for art's sake. The landscape of Versailles would not have suffered if one or all of the *bosquets* had been obliterated. Nor do we feel the mind of Le Nôtre living in them. Against one,

the most magnificent, he even showed resentment. And we find it more difficult to reconstruct life within these *bosquets* than even in the *Appartement du Roi* within the palace. More than anything else in Versailles they have fallen into neglect. Still, even to-day we leave the "torrid zone" with pleasure for these forsaken bowers. As we wander through the thick shade of the side aisles, catching sight now and then of the sunshine and statues and vases in the great central nave, or of the flowers round Latona, we come upon them by accident—as if raised by an enchanter's wand, and we must not expect to find them if we come again. We look around. We are in a space enclosed by trees. Children in pinafores play ball, or a nurse sits sewing. A few melancholy, discoloured statues watch them from near a broken paling.

And yet all Europe watched these *bosquets* in the making, and poets of all time have sung their brilliance and their charm. Even de Musset who was hostile to Versailles, exclaims :—

" Quel heureux monde en ces bosquets !  
Que de grands seigneurs, de laquais,  
Que de duchesses, de caillettes,  
De talons rouges, de paillettes : "

and we know that in the days of the great king *bosquets* were scenes of unimaginable, almost magic splendour. And all the splendour and the magic was spent on water. In fact, they were temples to water, with fountains as altars, so to say; *bosquets* were sometimes called "Fontaines Renfermées." The king and his guests would dance under a great dome formed by jets that crossed above their heads and not a drop would touch them, or they would come to a buffet where cups and pitchers were all formed of water, and fruit and flowers and leaves and sweetmeats simulated too in water; and sometimes the water rose like sheets of flame, with marble and gold and cloth of gold for background. The floors were of mosaic. Truly it was "La Vie Délicieuse!" Versailles was Armida's bower.

To-day their very names are changed, and some have disappeared, and many are difficult to identify from those glowing annals. But a fascinating collection of paintings in the Galerie of Trianon shows them as they were in all their far-famed brilliance. The artist, to please the taste of the day, has peopled them with the gods of Olympus, as if the mythology that crowds Versailles must come to life at last. Jupiter and Mars and Venus instead of Monseigneur and courtiers in large wigs take their pleasure in these bowers, while a host of little Cupids rake the beds and sweep the lawns. We shall see those *bosquets* fresh and living when we go to Trianon, but now must see their ghosts.

Let us leave the Parterre d'Eau, and, passing the Fontaine de Diane, go down the Allée des Trois Fontaines until we meet the *Allée de Ceres et de Flore*. By an oblique path we reach the most ghost-like and dreary of all, the *Rond Vert* that was the brilliant little Théâtre d'Eau, formerly an amphitheatre with tiers of steps. The picture at Trianon shows high jets, clustered thickly like silver birches in a forest, rising from gold basins set against the dark green "charmille." But, to be sure, its scheme of waters was always changing; hence its name; and not a drop flows now.

A happier scene, especially if the fountains are at play, is the *Île des Enfants*, a favourite sight of the "Grandes Eaux," where a delightful group of children play and laugh to see themselves all splashed with the water. It cannot be emphasized too much with regard to all this statuary that water was never a mere accessory or afterthought. All the grouping of marbles in different tints and the contrast of bronze, every attitude of figure and expression of face related to the effect and play of water: so that, on week-days, tourists nowadays see beauty only half alive.

We go through the deserted "*Etoile*" (which used to contain the *Montagne d'Eau*) to the *Fontaine de l'Obélisque* made by Mansart as late as 1706, and called then the *Salle des Festins*. There were four fountains here, now

only one tall jet rises with smaller jets around ; a rich and beautiful effect, like that of a sheaf of corn, within a finely outlined basin. The water slides over broad steps. We cross the Allée de Ceres and come to the whimsical, most Italian, least French of all the fountains, the *Encelade*, where the giant of Etna lies crushed under masses of rock, with water spouting from each one, and a huge column from his mouth. And so to the beautiful *Bosquet des Dômes*, so called because of two pavilions of marble and gold that stood on sites still visible. They were removed in 1819. We like it better without them, the effect must have been too architectural. The basin, the work of Girardon, is unchanged and surrounded by its original double balustrades : the one of a lovely shade of coral red marble and bronze, is hexagonal in shape, and the other is circular with bas-reliefs representing the arms used by all nations in warfare. Here a tall thin column of water rises to the height of the trees. Statues in green niches all round are listening to its splash : *Acis* and *Galatea* by Tuby, a beautiful *Aurora* by Magnier, *Dawn* by Le Gros and *Leucothea* and a *Nymphe*, and *Arion*.

Here, when first taken from the Grotto of Thetis, stood Girardon's group of Apollo being served by nymphs. It was a favourite *bosquet*. Dangeau in his diary tells us that on the 15th May, 1685, it was illuminated after dinner. The king and Monseigneur went down there. A ball was given and at the end Mademoiselle de Nantes danced a "dame-gigonne le plus joliment du monde."

We retrace our steps to the beautiful fountain of *Flora*, the first of the Bassin des Saisons. The goddess half buried by roses and surrounded by lovely children, is the work of Tuby. As we turn away we see ahead of us the still lovelier fountain of *Ceres*, or Summer, by Regnaudin, where the goddess lies upon a sheaf of corn with the sickle in her hand and is caught unawares by the splash of water.

Near by is the entrance to the famous *Bosquet des Bains d'Apollon*, created for Marie Antoinette and only finished in 1781. It is the work of Hubert Robert the famous

painter of ruins whose picture of the grounds at the time the trees were being felled in 1774 we saw in the castle rooms. And if this is not to our taste, it is because Louis XIV and Mansart and Le Nôtre have accustomed us to harmony between subject and surroundings, and we come here into a piece of work of the eighteenth century, far less noble because it was not French, not national; but trying to be English. This semi-mysterious grotto with cascades amid a wilderness intended to look wild is in the taste of the Castle of Otranto, so far so good. But it murders—worse, burlesques the work it framed—has robbed to frame—the fine seventeenth-century group of Apollo being served by nymphs, by Girardon, and of his horses by Marsy. To do them justice we must imagine them in the place for which they were composed, the small grotto of Thetis. To our taste the effect is almost comic when figures of human beings and horses carved in stone are placed deliberately to simulate action, like actors in a theatre, amid natural surroundings: more especially if these are designedly wild. It accentuates their stone, their lifelessness, they become dolls: whereas in themselves Apollo and the horses are among the finest statues of Versailles.

Let us cross the sunshine of the Parterre de Latone. Already from far we see the open glade with the fountain of *Bacchus*, or Autumn. We must picture all this fountain statuary, richly gilt; it must have glimmered softly through the shades. This one is by the brothers Marsy and very beautiful. *Bacchus*, the young god, with a mysterious smile on his face, lies surrounded by vine branches and little children playing with grapes and pressing them and pouring out wine. And from there it is easy to get into the *Salle de Bal*. A strange place, only charming when the water slides over the graduated rockwork or *rocaille*, with ivy trailing here and there. The most beautiful things in this *bosquet* are the tall bronze *torchères*. Louis XIV gave balls here. The orchestra was placed facing the water, and the dancing took place in the arena below and spectators sat on tiers.

Further outwards is the famous *Bosquet de la Reine*, in olden days the *Labyrinthe*: a labyrinth, and orangerie and grotto were indispensable features of a seventeenth-century garden. Even in Hampton Court we have a maze. Here *Æsop*'s fables were illustrated and the copper figure of *Æsop* the dwarf, now in the *Bosquet de l'Arc de Triomphe* stood here, as did also that of *Ariadne* guiding *Theseus*. Here, Monsieur Mauricheau-Beaupré tells us that Louis XIV planted tulip trees brought from Virginia and cedars from Lebanon and scented trees from Asia. We know that the king was very fond of this labyrinth and often brought his visitors here. But later it was changed to a less fantastic disposition. In general we find that towards the completion of Versailles all that was merely fantastic or eccentric or childish disappeared, leaving only such as was restrained and noble. Versailles had indeed justified its existence as a school of art for France. In the reign of Louis XVI in 1775 the *Labyrinth* became the *Bosquet de la Reine*, and gained a lurid fame in connection with the "Affaire du Collier." It was here that Madame Lamotte employed a woman, dressed so as to simulate Marie Antoinette, to meet the Cardinal de Rohan late on the night of the eleventh of August, 1784: and this meeting caused him to buy the necklace and so in the end implicate the queen.

We come past the *Fontaine de Saturne*, where the god figures winter as an old man, clinging to a breaker, with crabs and tortoises and snails around—the work of Regnaudin. We come on the left to the *Bassin du Miroir*, a large still sheet of water that dates from 1683 and is one of the most beautiful outlines in Versailles, and truly like a mirror in its frame. A charming contemporary picture shows us the old king in his *roulette*, surrounded by courtiers, sitting near this peaceful lake. Across the path is the entrance to the *Jardin du Roi*, formerly the *Ile Royale*, that became an unhealthy swamp and was arranged by Louis Philippe with undulating lawns and winding paths in the English style. Outside it are two statues, copies of

the Farnese Flora and of Hercules, of the time of Louis XIV.

Passing once more the Fontaine de Saturne, we go by an oblique path, as if towards the Char d'Apollon, and might easily miss the *Salle des Maronniers*, on our left. It is a mysterious, haunting spot, deeply shaded, like a Druid's temple, with chestnut trees for oaks. Now it is still and solitary, but it was the Salles des Antiques, one of the most brilliant of the *bosquets*, glittering with gold and freshness, a fairy palace in the woods. We shall see a particularly attractive picture of it when we go to Trianon. The shape, a rounded oblong, is as we see it now. All round stand marble busts, real antiques sent from Rome: it was a regular gallery of sculpture. Two fountains rise from basins in a marble floor, and the artist, to our great satisfaction, instead of painting gods of Olympus here, fills it with contemporary life. In the foreground are gorgeous Sedan chairs and a *roulette* shaded by a Japanese umbrella. Courtiers stroll about and look at busts and make low sweeping bows to ladies whose trains are being borne by little negro boys with long ear-rings, while little dogs bark.

This delicious bower has vanished, like an enchanter's whim. The fountains sleep, their spots are marked, like graves. Statues of Roman emperors watch ghost-like from under the old trees. No wonder poets love the *Salle des Maronniers*. Victor Hugo wrote a charming poem here, and asks a marble faun:—

“ Vous étiez du beau siècle amoureux,  
Sylvain, qu'avez-vous vu quand vous étiez heureux ? ”

We should all like to know, as we stand still and listen!

And then we leave this haunting little grove and cross the path to the largest and justly most famous of the *bosquets*, already far away we have seen it gleaming—Mansart's *Colonnade*, a ring of arches exquisitely outlined against green, formed by thirty-two columns of various brecciated marbles—the “ *fleur de pêcher*,” the *violette* and



LA COLONNADE



the *bleu turquin*. Each column is supported by a pilaster beyond, that gives a fine effect of strength. The band surrounding the colonnade above supports vases and in between the arches are masks full of vivacity; and bas-reliefs of children with musical instruments, the work of Coysevox, Tuby, Le Hongre and other fine artists: the colonnade was built for concerts. Down below between the columns stand basins of porphyry from which fountains rise in thinner, silvery columns exactly to the height of the capitals.

In the centre is Girardon's group of the Rape of Proserpine, where Pluto is bearing off the terrified girl from the arms of her mother: a work full of vigour. This too is action, vivid, tumultuous action: not, however, like the group of the Bosquet d'Apollon, planted abruptly among surroundings purposely made natural, not trying to deceive, but placed on a pedestal, screened from the forest, treated honestly as art. Columns, pedestal, arches and all the riches of detail prepare our eye and our mind, lead them gently from nature to its spirit captured in stone.

Some resent this entire colonnade. Not its style but its presence as too architectural. Tradition says Le Nôtre did, as a "piece of stone-mason's work." They say, and justly, that columns should support a roof under which men take shelter, or a passage that leads somewhere. Whereas this ring of marble arches, suddenly rising out of the woods, supports nothing, does nothing. It is merely beautiful, it is "art for art's sake."

Let us rather frankly accept this classic colonnade as a piece of romance. Let us take it that here, in the woods at last, the classic and romantic spirits met and kissed. Or that Mansart fell asleep under these trees and dreamed it. Or that the king and Louise de la Valliere strayed to this spot from the Plaisirs de Iles Enchantées and half-laughing, half-enchanted still, conjured up a vision of it. Come here on a May morning when the woods are green; stand in the middle of this marble ring, that shines. Rising

just above it you will see a cherry tree covered thick with blossoms, and the sky is deep blue overhead. A bird is singing loudly. Water gurgles in the half-closed fountains. At such a time all human thought and being seems wrapped up in beauty, and this colonnade of Mansart's is a part of it; right and natural.

Indeed it was the life beautiful, glorified in sight and sound and movement that was lived in these *bosquets*. Let us be thankful even for the stillness of their desolation. Napoleon planned to build in place of them panoramas of all the capitals of Europe he had entered in victory, and of the great battles where his arms had conquered.

It was enough to freeze the fountains.

The Revolutionaries had said "the plough must pass over Versailles." Providence, or the spirit of France, saved it.

At last we come out of the fascination of these *bosquets* back to the space and large free lines of the Allée Royale. What has happened?

We have come into a strange stillness. . . . The fiery steeds are checked. Fountains are locked in ice. Statues stare surprised at a world whiter than their marble, and at the folds of their own garments filled with snow. Soon over the frosty air we hear the sound of bells and jingling harness, and sledges bright with gold and scarlet swish past, drawn by horses tossing elegant white plumes. A hundred years have passed. It is the winter of 1776 when snow lay on the ground for weeks: and while the king distributed fuel to the poor, Marie Antoinette and her friends drove about the park. Old sledges had been discovered that Marie Leszinska had used when Poland was the fashion. Sleighing became the newest thing, the rage. Parisians came out too. It was at one of these parties that the queen first saw and fell in love with the exquisite young widow, the Princesse de Lamballe, who arrived there wrapped in sables, trimmed with ermine. The friendship lasted on into dark days and tragedy. As Marie

Antoinette said to Fersen, “ Je porte malheur à ceux qui m’aiment.”

Her enemies soon said these sledging parties were too Austrian and that the queen was trying to make Versailles into Schonbrunn. Always we see a shadow, we who know what was to follow. Impossible to watch any hour of Marie Antoinette’s life without seeing the end she could not see, the mob below the balcony calling “ Mort à l’Autrichienne.”

The sledge bells die away. . . . By the time we reach the terrace it is a hot summer evening, and we watch another scene. The queen cannot go to sleep so early as the king; so she and her ladies wearing their Trianon gowns of cambric muslin and large straw hats, come to sit incognita on these same marble seats to breathe the air and hear the freshening fountains. The townsfolk come in freely too: and somebody suggests music. So the musicians of the chapel bring wind-instruments and play.

The freshness is so pleasant we are loth to go. Till two and three o’clock in the morning we sit there. And it is all so innocent! The king’s maiden aunts, Madame Adelaide and Madame Sophie and Madame Victoire, have rooms on the ground floor and can survey the whole scene. The Comtesse d’Artois in the great rooms at the Dauphin’s corner has all her candles burning, they throw light on all the terrace. Still, incidents occur. A young clerk sits down near the queen and talks quite harmlessly about the beauty of the evening and the delight of the music, and the queen amused, answers him and keeps up her incognito until she rises with her two ladies and curtsys to him and goes; and he half-confused and half-delighted sees his mistake and goes away and talks. Soon Paris, France and England talk.

But we cannot listen as he does to the flutes and horns, or the low voices of the crowd by moonlight, because we hear the storm coming, the Swiss Guard being massacred, the “Marseillaise,” and Fouquier Tinville’s voice thundering.

If we have stopped unduly in the gardens sharing their intimate and wider life we are only following the example of the makers of Versailles. Early in its history enormous sums were spent upon them, out of all proportion to the palace which they anticipated even in size ; only when the château assumed its final elongation of the wings to north and south was it large enough to suit the gardens. It is true that for all their matchless beauty of woods and waters they were also conceived primarily as background for pageants, for the leisurely, stately, movements of large numbers of people, for great festivities. But then the occasions they commemorated were great : sieges raised, territories gained, treaties signed to French advantage, or visits from powerful allies. Great minds, Molière's, Lebrun's, Quinault's, Lulli's, wrote and painted and composed them. From the feasting of 1698 that celebrated the Treaty of Nimeguen and set all Versailles in a blaze of fire and water, down to the fête less lovely, but not less splendid at the wedding of the Dauphin and Marie Antoinette a century later, it is always in the gardens they took place ; and to this day the world may hate the palace but it loves the gardens and may think that the chief glory of the Galerie des Glaces above is to reflect them.

For all time these large, still sheets of water and this long perspective will attract the world : for Versailles, like Shakespeare or Dante or the Ninth Symphony belongs to all the world ; it is a part of our universal heritage of healing and delight. What if Le Nôtre's gardens are as clear cut and symmetrical as Versailles palace ; and that nothing is so alien to our English spirit—we who cling to undulating lawns and winding borders ? Versailles gardens with their ordered beauty are French, French as the Loire and the Seine and the Garonne that are the essence of her soil, that lie here symbolized in bronze. Her bitterest enemies, her most grudging allies feel it dimly in these gardens that here they reach the innermost, the soul, the best of France. Here their hearts are touched. They understand what she is

aiming at and why ; they feel her past streaming through her present better at Versailles than in Geneva or London or Turin. It is because Versailles in every line and curve speaks French.

France would not be completely French without the gardens of Versailles.

## CHAPTER IX

### LE GRAND TRIANON

*“ Vous Nympthes de Flore,  
Vous agréables Zéphirs,  
Parez, ornez ces lieux, qu'ils soient plus beaux encore ! ”  
Le Palais de Flore.*

HERE is an extraordinary unity in contrast. Trianon seems necessary to Versailles, just because the predominant impression of that great pile is one of solidity, of enormous strength, whereas there is something romantic and visionary, almost in a beautiful way theatrical, about the other. Go there by boat down the arm of the canal on a golden morning in October. The waters under the great elms are dreaming of two hundred years ago . . . of gold sails and La Langeronne, of Monseigneur and the Duchesse de Bourgogne. . . . They echo seamen's talk. You are in the woods, alone. . . . You come to steps, stately, double ones, edged by two fine classic vases, that curve round a sheet of water forming a horseshoe. Above on your right is a marble building, a kind of gallery, one-storied, long-drawn-out, which shines white or like ripe corn against the trees, with all its columns faintly flushed. Silent, empty, is it a dream—a background for a Diaghileff ballet ? If we come to-morrow will it still be there ?

From the first it made that impression. It was built in one winter ; it seemed to spring up with the flowers from the earth. It was a pleasure dome, a bubble. Besides, it occupied the spot of a fragile little “ Trianon de Porcelaine ” that had been covered with blue tiles and decked with pagodas and dragons in the style of China that was fashionable from the missionaries' tales. The horseshoe

steps from the canal are all that is left of this first Trianon. For it fell, with Madame de Montespan for whom it was built. We are glad. For to the king's change of love or love of building—more than of Madame de Maintenon—we owe one of the gems of the world, the Trianon of marble.

If we approach it from Versailles by road, and see it crowning a gently rising avenue, it looks trim and ceremonial enough at the far end: with a small moat on each side of a gate that leads into a courtyard deeper than its width with the palace round three sides. Only, and this is the marvel of delight, the side that faces us is pierced by the well-known peristyle, an open colonnade through which we see the trees and fountains of the park behind. But if we cross the peristyle and stand within the lovely gardens we come on all the romance, the strange beauty of the long façade—all columns, and arched windows;\* and the wing on the left that is the Galerie; and yet a further wing beyond that is shaded by trees and called Trianon Sous-Bois. These side-wings look uncommonly like additions, mere afterthoughts; but some would see in them a special purpose of Mansart's: to suggest, to those arriving by the horseshoe steps from the canal, the high profile of Versailles as seen from the Lac des Suisses. The shape is low and long-drawn-out, but not monotonous for it is varied in colouring: at first sight it always seems that Trianon is flushed by sunrise. The columns in the peristyle towards the entrance are pale green, *vert campan*, stained to a copper hue. The pilasters that frame the windows are pink, *marbre de Languedoc*, they have white bases and white capitals. We must remember too that the roof line was then broken by vases and statues of children. And to this day all the windows are surmounted by sculptures of war, hunting, fishing, gardening; and violins, harps, flutes grouped on either side of shells. We see hounds and eagles, sunflowers and roses and anemones—rich, vivid and beautiful. The façade of Trianon Sous-Bois, that has two

\* See plate facing page 190.

stories, is adorned with original and living "mascarons," young faces crowned with grapes, and above the windows are rich bunches of grapes and cornucopias.

The Grand Trianon, with its arches and colonnades is less French than anything the king built. It would seem to come from that part of his nature that was most of the *Renaissance*, his love of beauty for the mere sake of beauty. Above all, it was a part of his love of flowers.

Trianon is inseparable in our mind from flowers. With its strange zigzag contour it seems built to embrace the garden or to thread its way among the flower-beds. Its rooms are on one floor, so that the inmates should be as near as possible to the sight of them and breathe all their scent: and that all the mirrors should reflect them. From the first, poets celebrated Trianon as the *Palais de Flore*.

Louis XIV was middle-aged by the time he built it. Marly was finished and so was Versailles. He tired sometimes of the perpetual ceremony of Versailles palace that grew every year more like a town with its crowds, its separate dwellings, its street and even shops. Besides, the tumult of his loves, the heyday of his festivities was over. He yearned for intimacy and quiet time for work. And though compared with the life of Louis XV even in Versailles, or the still greater freedom enjoyed by Marie Antoinette afterwards at the Petit Trianon this palace seems stately enough, to Louis XIV it was the simple life, balm and rest and solitude.

Here he could be a country gentleman, survey the builders, watch the lopping of trees and show privileged guests over his conservatories. For none ever entered Trianon without special invitation; and this was a greater honour even than admission to Marly, for if ladies were invited there, husbands came by right: not so at Trianon; and it was one of Saint-Simon's grievances that his wife was often invited without him. The king used to say, "Versailles pour la cour, Marly pour mes amis, et Trianon pour moi."

It was begun in the summer of 1687; and very soon even

inside the palace an army of fifty sculptors, craftsmen, painters who had finished the Galerie des Glaces and had not yet begun the Œil de Bœuf or the Chapel worked at full speed throughout the winter of 1687-8 under the direction of Mansart; for Lebrun had been replaced as soon as Louvois was in power. La Cotte worked with Mansart. Tradition says it is to him we owe the peristyle. We shall find work by all the old friends, Coysevox, Coustou, Tuby, Van Cleve, Le Hongre, Le Gros, Magnier, Regnaudin. And as we shall expect, we find much the same spirit and style in the decoration here as at Versailles: masques over arches and doors, fluted columns crowned by acanthus leaves, elaborate friezes and ceilings ornamented with palm leaves, wheat and grapes and shells, fire-places surmounted by groups of helmets and spears and shields: in short, we find a miniature Versailles.

When James II King of England and his queen came over from St. Germain to Trianon on the 7th January, 1689, their host received them royally in the marble peristyle and conducted them through all the shining rooms of the Aile Gauche. But we tourists are taken in batches through a door on the left of the courtyard and down a corridor arranged by Louis Philippe in 1840. (The citizen king altered Trianon extensively to make it a royal residence after Versailles became a *musée*.) Moreover, we shall not see any room at leisure, being hurried all the way by guides. It is a pity, for though this place was built in six months and painted, carved and finished in a year, its pictures are interesting and play no unimportant part in the development of French art.

In 1688 the king gave large orders for paintings for the alcoves and panels: Monsieur Noel Coypel, for instance, being assigned eight in the legend of Hercules. Boulogne Jouvenet, Houasse all had important tasks. And nothing can exemplify more plainly the leanings of this Trianon art than the fact that it is the lighter side of the myths of Apollo and Hercules that was selected. We shall see Venus

sad because Adonis goes to the hunt ; and Thetis receiving Apollo and other " Morceaux de Réception " exhibition pictures. And why not ? Versailles was a great symbol to the world, a solemn stage for monarchy : but Trianon was a flower, a thing of charm, a pleasure dome. So subjects were selected that Lebrun would have thought profane and beneath the dignity of the king's house. The art of Trianon is happy and free in every way. We shall find none of that unity and discipline so visible under Lebrun in Versailles, for instance in the Salle des Gardes de la Reine where we remember Coypel and De la Fosse not only painted two pictures but built them as it were for that room, to its scale and in harmony with its colouring. Here pictures are more independent. Grace and charm have taken the place of the majesty of Versailles. If the architecture of Trianon is still the work of Mansart, if its carved garlands are still rich and thick and heavy, the pictures hung by Louis XIV upon his walls foreshadow a new style, that of the eighteenth century. If we compare it with the Petit Trianon it still seems classical and Grand Siècle but compared with Versailles the Grand Trianon is all charm and grace and lightness. In fact Trianon provides a transition. It may even have helped to relax Versailles : we see perhaps something of its happier spirit in the frieze of children in the *Œil de Bœuf* or in the vivacity of the chapel carvings.

The pictures ordered so lavishly were, however, not all executed. The League of Augsburg that played such havoc with the Versailles silver stopped the painting of many of the Trianon pictures. The king needed money for the wall. Besides, the king had come greatly under the religious influence of Madame de Maintenon, who censured the Versailles mythology, blamed Lulli's operas and considered the subjects ordered for Trianon too free. It was her doing that many tapestries from Versailles were sent to the Gobelins to have the figures draped and many pictures were altered. Still, we shall see much interesting work.

The *Aile Gauche* has five large rooms with twelve

windows. They occupy the whole height of the building on the garden side, but on the rear they hide an *entre-sol*. The room we are shown first happens to be the last one James II and the French king's guests would reach.

The *Salon des Glaces* is built in obvious imitation of the Versailles Grande Galerie though here are no coloured marbles or paintings. The walls are merely sheeted with mirrors. The decorations unchanged since 1689 are very rich. Garlands are carved over the mirrors round masques of smiling women and on the frieze are children playing at war and music within a band of fleur-de-lis below the shells above. The mantelpiece, however, with very fine bronze work is of the period of Louis XVI. Three windows open on to a balcony that has one rail left of its wrought iron worked by François Boulet in 1689. The furniture is of the period. The great table of Louis Philippe's time, one beautiful round from a tree, used for Cabinet Councils—ideally suitable—has been moved to the *Salon Rond*.

The *Chambre* (bedroom) was used first by Louis XIV and then by the Grand Dauphin his son and afterwards by Napoleon's mother. It is her bed that we see, though afterwards occupied by Louis Philippe who inserted his initials on it. The two mirrors are surmounted by masques that are masterpieces of grace and fantasy, akin in spirit to the *mascarons* on *Trianon Sous-Bois*, and are surrounded by boughs, crowned with acanthus leaves and with a kind of wings at their necks. The carved woodwork here, as in all the other rooms, was covered with soft gold, but now is dull white or grey-blue.

We come through an *Antichambre* to the *Salon de la Chapelle* at one time used as a chapel with the altar in a recess at the end. This is more richly decorated. Grapes and wheat under a cornice are suggestive of the Eucharist. Between the capitals of pilasters the smoke of incense rises from censers wreathed with palms. The pictures of flowers date from the time of Louis XIV and are the

more suitable where from every window we see flowers in bloom.

The *Salle des Princes* was used as a kind of *Œil de Bœuf*. Here there is not much ornament left, only a cornice of *fleur-de-lis* reversed.

We come into the peristyle which at one time was glazed on both sides. Here suppers were given by King Louis XIV. We come to the *Aile Droite*, the first room of which is the *Salle des Colonnes* or *Salon Rond*; decorated with Corinthian columns and a rich frieze of palm branches.

The *Salon de Musique* has exquisite carvings of oak leaves, garlands, masques. Above these are Cupids and flaming censers. The portrait of Louis XV is by Van Loo, and that of Marie Leszinska is a reduced version of Nattier's masterpiece at Versailles.

The *Grand Salon* was made up by Louis Philippe of the Antichambre des Jeux and the Chambre du Sommeil, a part of the suite given to the Duchesse de Bourgogne. Here nothing is left of the original decorations.

The *Cabinet du Couchant* or Sunset Room has beautiful carvings over the mirrors that date from 1688 and a frieze with birds on each side of flower-wreathed vases. This is a delightful room.

But the richest of them all is the *Salon Frais* (or by a later name the *Salon des Malachites*, from gifts of Malachite given to Napoleon I by Alexander I after the Treaty of Tilsit). The doors here show some of the finest work at the end of the seventeenth century. The sphinxes and flowers are especially beautiful, and so are the thick rich garlands round medallions.

From this very elegant room we reach the *Grande Galerie* with its Cupids and lovely decorations as Mansart built it: a reminiscence of the Galerie at Versailles. Only here, no mirrors were necessary. Real windows face each other. A real garden shines on either side. The Galerie runs like a bridge between woods and water and above all flowers. And as if to link all this loveliness in our thoughts, this vision of flowers, with the other, greater garden, Cotelle's famous

paintings of the *Bosquets de Versailles* are placed between the windows.

The memory of those *bosquets*, or rather of the poor ghosts we saw, is fresh in our minds. Here they live for ever, young and glowing. True, they are peopled by Olympus fantastically, and yet in a homely way, in a charming confusion of fact and fiction, just as people sleeping in Trianon might have seen Versailles *bosquets* in dreams. Some of them we never saw ; they are destroyed or greatly changed, such as the *Arc de Triomphe* here pictured full of rhetoric and conquest and mythology ; or the *Labyrinthe* here shown with curious birds rising fan-shaped at the entrance and the dwarf *Æsop* on one side ; or the *Bosquet des Trois Fontaines*, where water rises in tapers straight as swords or arches gracefully, while in the foreground plump Cupids are raking paths and trimming borders. Some are much as we see them now : in the *Bassin du Dragon*, for instance, where the artist has placed Apollo wearing a scarlet robe in a chariot and the dragon is spouting fire. Before the *Colonnade* we have a curious fantasy : Girardon's famous group of Apollo and the horses in statuary is brought to life. The chariot is being put away, Apollo being crowned ; nymphs are watering horses. The *Orangerie* is seen from the parterre below, practically unchanged even to the trim kitchen garden of *La Quintinie*, but goddesses and Cupids are busy with spades and brooms. There is a more elaborate disposition of flower-beds among the orange trees and oranges in the foreground. In a second picture the *Orangerie* seen from the *Lac des Suisses* is enclosed within a marble rim and two gold boats are on the water. Here we realize in memory afresh the grandeur of the enormous stairways, the *Cent Marches* on each side : half-way up we did not see the palace ; the stair had tried to scale the sky. A few of the *bosquets*, such as the *Ile Royale* (that now is the *Jardin du Roi*) and the *Salle des Maronniers* live with contemporary life, courtiers with periwigs and ladies in large hoops and *fontanges* on their heads are curtsying to each other, and little dogs are

frisking, and gay young gentlemen are lying on the grass or feeding swans, while richly gilt sedan chairs and scarlet *roulettes* are ranged upon the side.

It was a pleasant thought to place these Versailles memories within the sight of other lovely gardens. Trianon does not suffer by comparison.

At the end of the Galerie is the *Salon des Jardins* which connected the palace with Trianon Sous-Bois, and to the left is a stairway with iron rail gracefully wrought with foliage and tendrils by Alexis Fordrin in 1688.

Returning from the Galerie we come to the *Salon des Sources*, a corner room so called because it faced a part of the garden watered by several streams. Are they not all charming names, *Salon des Sources*, *Salon Frais*, *du Couchant*, *de la Musique*? But then life in those rooms was literally wreathed with flowers and lulled by water. Even "Madame Palatine," who approved of nothing in Versailles, praised the charm of the *Salon des Sources* in a letter written on a hot day in June to her aunt, the Electress Sophia. In this room we come more into the art of the eighteenth century, there is more complication and fantasy and arabesques and light, loose foliage.

We have reached the suite facing a small corner of the grounds called the *Jardin du Roi*—the usual *petits appartements* to be found at the rear of all State rooms. These were occupied successively by Madame de Maintenon by Stanislas Leszinska and by Madame de Pompadour. They have been entirely altered and to us are chiefly associated with the intimate life and work of Napoleon. Here is his study (the *Cabinet de Travail*) on the site of Madame de Maintenon's bedroom, the bathroom and the bedroom of Marie Louise and the small *Salon Jaune* with a table in Roman mosaic given to Napoleon by the Pope. Here we see his furniture and curtains and even his wall papers.

The wing meeting the Aile Droite at the angle of the *Jardin du Roi* has been much changed. When first built Louis XIV occupied all its space with a theatre that was entered on the ground floor by the *Salon des Colonnes*.

There was a tribune upstairs for the king who reached it from the *entre-sol* by a staircase from Madame de Maintenon's rooms. This Salles des Comédies was destroyed in 1700, for the king had given the left wing to the Dauphin and the right to the Duchesse de Bourgogne and needed rooms for himself.

The first room, the *Antichambre*, was much larger in his day ; its windows overlooked the courtyard and also the Jardin du Roi. The cornice with its emblems of war and music, the *chambranles* with palms and rushes date from those first years of the eighteenth century. But the chimney-piece and panels with delicate thinner design are of the time of Louis XV. Here is a fine picture by Le Moyne (whose work we saw in the Salon de la Paix and on the ceiling of the Salon d'Hercule).

The *Chambre* or bedroom of Louis XIV is also much enlarged since his day when it consisted of two smaller rooms and a staircase to an *entre-sol* where slept the king's doctor, Fagon, in constant attendance. Here again are beautiful medallion paintings of flowers over the doors ; they are of the time of Louis XIV ; we never forget flowers at Trianon ; and the cornice placed in 1713 with masques and arabesques and children seated on palm branches anticipates the art of the Regency. This room was furnished and decorated and with unusually good taste by Louis Philippe in anticipation of the visit of Queen Victoria in 1842.

This completes our tour of the rooms that are shown : though there are beautiful carvings in Trianon Sous-Bois.

And throughout Trianon there is fine furniture : marble tables richly gilt and carved of the period of Louis XIV with masques and acanthus leaves ; consoles and cabinets of the Louis XVI period, and Beauvais tapestries on chairs and sofas ; there are beautiful examples of Empire beds, cabinets, tripods, *torchères*, especially in the rooms inhabited by Napoleon. Trianon is very rich.

But all the art and beauty of Trianon surpasses itself reaches its summit in the gardens to which the palace is but background. But a perfect background! Come through the peristyle at sunset when its marbles flush a deeper rosier pink and the flower-beds spread like a carpet of rich purple to their base, you will say that nothing lovelier exists. See Trianon white and mysterious under a full moon, you will say it is a vision.

From the beginning the gardens took first place. Trianon was early known as the palace of flowers. Rare trees and plants were brought there. The *Orangerie* still to be seen was one of the finest in France. The conservatories were famous; for though the king was no botanist like Louis XV he took great pride in rearing summer flowers and fruits at all seasons. The gardeners performed prodigies. Not only were flowers always in bloom but in enormous quantities; thousands and thousands being planted in the beds merely in pots so that in a few hours of the king's absence an entirely different scheme could be prepared: and it was always flowers with strong scent such as orange blossoms, jasmine, narcissi, tuberoses, hyacinths and stock. There was a corner of the gardens known as the *Cabinet des Parfums*. The ambassadors of Siam marvelled at the perfumed air. Soon Trianon was known as the most scented garden in the world.

The grounds were laid out by Le Nôtre. If there is not the great vista of Versailles, it has all the space and sense of space that he could gather in: an open parterre to the west, groves symmetrically planned towards the north and to the south the noble terrace overlooking the canal and the steps where the king landed when coming in his gondola from Versailles. Mansart placed fine fountains. Trianon to this day has its *Grandes Eaux*. There is the *Plafond d'Eau*, a fine sheet of water decorated only with two dragons in Chinese style; and the more elaborate *Buffet* where the water slides over a pyramid of white and rosy marble ledges; and panels of metal work, with Neptune and Amphitrite at the summit. There is the charming

*Fontaine des Nymphes* beyond the *Amphithéâtre* where Roman busts remind us of the Cour de Marbre, there is a delicate fountain near the Jardin du Roi. But on the whole there is less sculpture and more flowers in Trianon.

But how melancholy to see the condition of these sculptures and these gardens! The obvious, indispensable parterres and paths are tended, but the rest is in neglect beyond any in Versailles. Would that some millionaire might adopt Trianon—give, say, a quarter of his substance for free disposal to its curator.

And if there is no tragic ghost of Marie Antoinette to haunt its groves, we see there a more charming, wayward and caressing figure, that of Marie Adelaide de Savoie, the little Duchesse de Bourgogne, so dearly loved by the king, so adored by her husband; who indeed had written a fine Latin ode on Trianon for his preceptor the saintly bishop Fénelon. And she loved to be there, in leisure hours spared from the hens and dairy of her Ménagerie at the other end of the canal. Dancing, acting, music were the breath of her life. We hear of constant festivities at Trianon. Ballets, carnivals, balls, operas are recorded, as well as games of "Mail" and "Lansquenet" enjoyed to the uttermost breath by the Duchess and her troupe of friends.

On one occasion after the opera there was dancing and then Monseigneur and the Duchesse de Bourgogne and all their guests entered their gondolas, but the Docteur Fagon would not let the king go too for fear of rheumatism though it was a hot night in July. So he sat upon the terrace up above the steps and listened to the flutes and hautboys on the water, and went at last back to Versailles safe in his grand chariot, we suppose, with all the windows closed by Fagon. But the little Duchess and her friends came back and wandered in the Trianon gardens and breathed the scent and picked the flowers and played moonlight games, until dawn came and they returned by boat to Versailles and the waters shone in streaks slowly, and the sky broke into gold behind the enormous palace. She saw

Madame de Maintenon off in her chariot to St. Cyr and so to bed herself, at last.

We are reminded of the young Queen Victoria dancing all the night and going out at dawn on the roof of Buckingham Palace to see the sun rise behind St. Paul's Cathedral.

In the reign of Louis XV Trianon found many uses. Peter the Great stayed there, using the rooms in Trianon Sous-Bois. Afterwards, when Stanislas Leszinska came to visit this daughter, the Queen of France, he also stayed in the small rooms of Madame de Maintenon that were later to be Napoleon's. Louis XV came here to hide his grief, and stayed some days to weep alone, at the death of Madame de Chateauroux. It was Madame de Pompadour who finally brought life back to Trianon, brought the king and gave gay supper-parties. And to amuse him she planned a menagerie, a farmyard, for which in 1749 Gabriel built the charming little pavilion that is still unchanged in the north part of the garden, later known as the *Jardin Français*. It contains a central room flanked by four small ones: a white drawing-room with gold mirrors and a service room; Verberckt carved the decorations, beautiful gold, fluted pillars with acanthus capitals; and the famous frieze of farmyard birds, pigeons, peacocks and hens and ducks, while Cupids over the doorways play with cages and baskets. Soon there was a complete home farm in which the king took pleasure. But especially he was interested in the experiments and botanical discoveries of his famous gardener, Claude Richard, an Irishman, who had followed the king of England to St. Germain and whom Louis XV had annexed. His house in the *gardes* still exists. Soon great furnaces and conservatories were erected. Louis XV showed himself a botanist not only interested in flowers. Already in his "potager" at Versailles that is to-day a famous school of gardening he had imported figs and coffee plants and pineapples. He started the culture of the strawberry, little eaten so far. Experiments in corn and sowing and ploughing were also carried out at Trianon,

and later a complete botanical garden was arranged with plants classified according to the system of Linnæus, with whom Claude Richard and his son Antoine corresponded. The directors of the Botanical Gardens in Paris were consulted. The Trianon garden gained a scientific importance. Trees and bushes were imported from India and from China. Antoine Richard made extensive journeys to Portugal, Spain, the Balearic Islands, Tunis, Algeria and Asia Minor. To shelter the things he brought back, another enormous conservatory was built on the site where is now the artificial grotto.

We hear very little about the Grand Trianon in the reign of Louis XVI. Napoleon made it his principal country residence. He came here on the day of his divorce from Josephine ; he brought Marie Louise, niece of Marie Antoinette, here. Louis Philippe occupied it continually ; so did Napoleon III. It was here that the Empress Eugenie collected an exhibition of relics of Marie Antoinette. In 1870, in the marble peristyle, Marshal Bazaine was tried by court-martial for his surrender of Metz, and here in the Grande Galerie peace with Hungary was signed in 1919, as the last echo of the Great War. It now forms a part of the Musée Nationale de Versailles. It is a show-place and belongs to the nation.

On the whole the Grand Trianon, for all its beauty, has not gripped the world's imagination. It has no symbolic importance, it is not the expression of an enormous national effort, it was not built for the greater glory of France, as was Versailles. Nor does it throb with all the life of a human being, a queen of tragedy, as does the Petit Trianon. It was built for pleasure. The Grand Trianon would seem to be a thing apart, to use another idiom it is not "programme music." Its charm is remote and serene, that of mere beauty, of pure art.



# THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

## CHAPTER X

### THE ROOMS OF LOUIS XV

*"Beautiful Armida palace where the inmates lived enchanted lives, lapped in soft music of adulation, waited on by the splendours of the world—which nevertheless hangs wondrously as by a single hair . . ."*

Carlyle.

FOR seven years after the death of the Roi Soleil Versailles lay as it were in twilight. The Regent preferred the gaiety of Paris and Louis XV's childhood, pictured for us by Rigaud in its radiant beautiful promise like a dawn, was not spent here. The Grandes Eaux played at stated intervals. Versailles had the half life of a show-place, just as it has to-day. Travellers went over it: a very important one, Peter the Great of Russia, stayed there twice. On his first visit he occupied the bedrooms of the Queens of France, not decorated then as we see it now, as Marie Antoinette left it, but in its first terrific splendour; its walls still panelled with marble and its roof that figured the procession of the sun and hours still blazing with gold, a bedroom that spoke loud of Louis XIV. The second time he stayed at Trianon. He visited the Ménagerie, sailed on the Grand Canal, examined every corner of the gardens and every room in the palace, standing long and silently in the Salon de la Guerre before the great equestrian stucco of Louis XIV as if the strength and speed in it—or the rider's great will—stirred answering

notes in him. He even went to St. Cyr to examine Madame de Maintenon, pulled aside the curtains of her bed and stared and went away. We do not know what he thought of her, but that he was deeply impressed by Versailles we recognize from much that was built at Petrograd and Peterhof. Paris and Russia have always fascinated each other.

In 1722 the King of France returned and the great palace became once more the seat of monarchy. Once more the eyes of Europe were turned eagerly upon the little Cour de Marbre. And we who come as travellers to-day do the same thing ; leave the tourists round the statue of Louis XIV and come to stand in its stillness and look up at its windows and try to breathe the life that streamed through those rooms : though the centre of the stage will soon be shifted. We shall no longer gaze on the great bedroom under the blue clock nor on the windows to our left of Madame de Maintenon but at a first floor suite just opposite, upon our right.

For in 1722 Versailles was still the leading theatre of Europe. True, the audience had somewhat shifted seats, Brandenburg had left her dim-lit, negligible corner and come to the front as Prussia and a kingdom and dangerous, had Versailles only guessed it, whereas Austria was less formidable and Dubois and the actors on the stage did not at once realize it.

Nor were they sufficiently disquieted over the growth of England's navy (seeing that France had neglected her own, and had great colonies to protect, a growing realm in India and large tracts of America). Above all, France herself, Paris and the provinces, should have been reckoned with more accurately by those who looked so good humouredly and elegantly out of the windows up above us. France was no longer quite so awestruck by Versailles.

The fact was times had changed. France was not awestruck by anything. The magnificent seventeenth century was over when a monarch's demands not only for the country's blood and money but also for obedience were met

half-way, hands outstretched, because the country's danger was so plain to see (we shall meet that clean-burning, simple patriotism again at Valmy and again at the Marne)—when monarchy itself was accepted whole, as a part of beneficent nature, like the Loire, or the sun. But then Louis XIV could make it seem so: his personality cast a glamour over the throne; he made the *fleur-de-lis* shine with a mystic radiance before all the world. We saw that spirit, that grandeur expressed plainly even in the great rooms that Louis XIV built, and the gardens and the Orangerie—it was his doing, that passionate attachment to the monarchy that flamed out thirty years after his death when his successor lay dangerously ill at Metz. It was he, the tyrant, who made the languid Adonis Louis XV the *Bien Aimé*.

That age was over. Hearts were no longer swept away. Gone was the great creative impulse. In its place was a cold wind that laid bare and dissected, that sent Frenchmen peering into the English constitution where the Georges were reigning so comfortably one after another—and burrowing into the origins of law and religion, of everything, especially monarchy. Louis XIV's Olympian majesty might have withered that spirit. His hand would have swept away the "Contrat Social" and the "Esprit des Lois" and "Candide" as mere echoes of the Fronde:—or who knows, with a fine gesture have appropriated even them into his service. Louis XIV had the right. He had served France well enough himself. France was proud of Louis XIV. The rough stucco of Coysevox shows the monarchy of France on horseback out in the wind, rushing to victories and glorious treaties. Whereas we associate Louis XIV with warm boudoirs. France grew to be ashamed of Louis XV. There lay the difference. Just when France was most critical she had the wrong king. Only high moral character, or great strength of purpose could have impressed the cynical eighteenth century in France. And there was nothing high or strong in Louis XV. He was not wanting in judgment nor in courage on the

battlefield nor magnanimity in gleams ; but he was indolent, pursued by boredom, enslaved by women, he was depraved : and when the first spell of youth and beauty was over —there was a canker in that beauty—he cast no glamour.

France might even have condoned these personal failings Louis XIV himself had not been above reproach though there had been measure and decorum in his sins : with the Grand Monarque the dignity of France came always first, but when France in addition saw her national prestige gone, her generals abandoned, her colonies lost, proud France came to look with loathing on these rooms where her king led the life of a sultan in his seraglio. Ribald songs were sung in Paris and witty epigrams affixed even to the royal statue. In short, France saw the fleur-de-lis soiled. It was the *Bien Aimé*—and not the autocrat who had browbeat the parliament and said, “ *L'Etat, c'est Moi* ”—who made the Revolution possible.

And this contrast of personality will be visible to us to-day on our first step into the small rooms of Louis XV. They are as different from those of his great grandfather, as characteristic of the two men as would be their two hand-writings.

For Louis XV was a builder and art patron too. True, he is only responsible for the completion of the Bassin de Neptune, outside, and for one State room, the Salon d'Hercule, and there the style of Louis XIV is still finely and faithfully obeyed. But Louis XV's name, in fact all eighteenth-century art, is associated with somewhat smaller but still spacious rooms in Versailles that he changed and adapted, threw into one or cut into two, in this wing on our right. Architects said that this “ rabbit warren ” cost as much as did the enormous halls of Louis XIV. Louis XV appropriated all the rooms round the courtyard right up to the top floor, and lived here in a luxury of privacy such as the Grand Monarque never allowed himself. Here in this wing was no free access to any good citizens of Paris provided they were decently dressed, no royal meals served like church services before an eager, watching public. Even

great courtiers could not enter without special invitation, and no windows overlooked the king's intimate supper-parties or saw La France making his own coffee. The Comte d'Hezecques, a page, and in residence, relates that on October 7th, 1789, roaming about the disordered palace he came upon rooms of whose very existence he had no notion. The main suite runs parallel with the Grand Appartement and is covered on the north by Le Vau's façade. From the bedroom we could reach the Salon d'Apollon. The Salon de la Pendule lies behind Mercure. The Salon des Porcelaines is reached from the Salon de Venus. One line of rooms is connected with the others by narrow passages and rooms round small courtyards.

Let us leave our morals on the threshold or assume that art has none and be grateful for these rooms. Even if the king pulled down the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, the chef-d'œuvre of Lebrun with marbles and gold and priceless works of art and a fountain always at play, and even if he destroyed the Petite Galerie of Mignard—so that not a vestige remains in all this wing of seventeenth-century work, these rooms have great value of their own, representing eighteenth-century art at its loveliest, they are as sincere in their way, as typical of that period as is the Salon de la Guerre or the Galerie des Glaces of the classic Grand Siècle.

They express, in fact, an entire reaction of mood. If life, even royal life, was spent less in public it might be more comfortable, majesty could relax, solemnity break out in smiles. Instead of large, marble, ceremonial halls we shall find small dainty rooms panelled with wood. No longer are they decorated with heavy stucco but with delicate carving. There will be fewer "*trophies*" of swords and shields, more flowers and emblems of music and of gardening. Conventional ornaments give way to trailing flowers—flowers as they grow. Furniture is less heavy. Straight lines give way to curves. What we lose in majesty we gain in joyousness and supple grace. If we miss the vigour and manliness of Coysevox and the majesty of Lebrun we gain the delicate colouring and misty charm of Nattier and Boucher. The

art in these rooms is admirably sincere; for life was a *fête galante*.

We reach Louis XV's rooms as the courtiers did; through the Galerie des Glaces and the Salon du Conseil. Even the position of the Royal sleeping-room was changed. Not that the Chambre de Louis XIV was deposed. It still remained the centre and symbol of the monarchy. The official *levers* and *couchers* were still held there. But it was too formidable, certainly too cold a place for Louis XV; the race of Titans was over, and when courtiers had retired he would rise from the State bed and pass to a smaller room.

This *Chambre de Louis XV* (126) had been used as a billiard-room by the old king. Louis XV threw an alcove out into the Cour des Cerfs behind, partly to enlarge it and partly as a frame for the royal bed, like that over the bed of Louis XIV. This room faces south and is very beautiful with its mirrors and delicate gildings and tapestries in soft tones, shining in the sunlight. On the white panelled walls are medallions enclosing groups of children beautifully carved and gilt. Already we come into the highest glory of French wood-carving, and these are by the great Verberckt, an artist born in Antwerp, but a naturalized Frenchman. On the cornice are musical instruments and the fleur-de-lis. The doors are surmounted by charming portraits of the king's daughters. That of Madame Henriette is by Nattier. On a table is a bronze bust of Louis XIV and on the mantelpiece one of Louis XV as a child. The three Gobelin tapestries in the alcove, priceless in value, exquisite in grace and life and colouring, illustrate the story of *Don Quixote*.

It is fine, but a boudoir. Its charm is that of Sèvres china—of Versailles life in the eighteenth century. It is not manly as was the gorgeous room blazing with gold in which the Grand Monarque had the courage to die, “*Comme un saint et un héros*,” said Bossuet.

And yet in this lovely boudoir Louis XV had to die. His day came on May 10th, 1774. He lay on a small camp bed in

the middle of the room. He had been brought here from Trianon where he was taken ill with small-pox.

The scene shines luridly through history. We see every detail as did the courtiers, loathing and fearing his disease and yet looking through the door from the Salon du Conseil. We see the room bright with mocking sunlight and tapers held by priests ; and we see Madame du Barry's struggle to remain by the royal patient and the archbishop refusing flatly to grant him absolution if she did ; we watch his plain, neglected daughters take her place at last ; while Paris and all France watched cynically, waiting with half-concealed impatience for the end of him who was once the *Bien Aimé*. He lies there breathing heavily ; and his face is swollen stiff as a mask, and copper-coloured "like that of a Moor," says the *Duc de Croy*. It is a scene for Hogarth's painting. None can surpass Carlyle's :

"Beautiful Armida-Palace, where the inmates lived enchanted lives ; lapped in soft music of adulation ; waited on by the splendours of the world—which nevertheless hangs wondrously as by a single hair. . . . For the doctors look grave, ask privily, ' If his Majesty had not the small-pox long ago ? '—and doubt it may have been a false kind . . . ' on the evening of the 4th,' Dame Dubarry issues from the sick-room with perceptible ' trouble in her visage.' Such a whispering in the *Œil de Boeuf* ! Is he dying then ? What can be said is, that Dubarry seems making up her packages, she sails weeping through her gilt boudoirs, as if taking leave. . . . Alas, the Chapel organs may keep going. In the evening the whole Court with Dauphin and Dauphiness, assist at the Chapel : priests are hoarse with chanting their ' Prayers of Forty Hours,' and the heaving bellows blow. Almost frightful ! For the very heaven blackens ; battering rain-torrents dash, with thunder, almost drowning the organ's voice : and electric fire-flashes make the very flambeaux on the altar pale. So that the most, as we are told, retired, when it was over, with hurried steps, ' in a state of meditation (*recueillement*) ' and said little or nothing. . . . This tenth May day falls into the

loathsome sick-bed, but dull, unnoticed there. . . . Life, like a spent steed, is panting towards the goal. In their remote apartments, Dauphin and Dauphiness stand road ready ; all grooms and equeuries booted and spurred : waiting for some signal to escape the house of pestilence. And, hark ! across the *Œil de Bœuf*, what sound is that ; sound 'terrible and absolutely like thunder ?' It is the rush of the whole Court, rushing as in wager, to salute the new Sovereigns : 'Hail to your Majesties.' The Dauphin and Dauphiness are King and Queen ! Overpowered with many emotions, they two fall on their knees together, and, with streaming tears, exclaim, 'O God, guide us, protect us ; we are too young to reign !'—Too young indeed."

Too young indeed ! He, as Lamartine says, "the only pure creature in that Court," and she a child, how were they to stop a flood that had been gathering for a hundred years ?

And as we talk of them, standing in this bedroom of Louis XV we must leave twenty years behind us and look ahead to the end, and see Louis XVI here ; and the queen too breathless and ghastly, in her flight from death in the cold early hours of an October day. The mob have swarmed up the marble stairs and rushed inquisitive, bewildered, losing their way and ever hungrier for her blood until they reach her bedroom and find it empty. For long hours the whole distracted family, king, queen, Madame Elizabeth, Dauphin, Madame Royale, are herded together in this room, consulting with dismayed courtiers, interviewing Lafayette in whom they only half believe, deciding, changing, ordering carriages and counter-ordering or watching the mob from behind the curtains while the little Dauphin says he is hungry, "Maman, j'ai faim," and the king, sullen or dazed, says nothing at all, and the clamour grows more violent down below, and Lafayette at last advises the Queen to come out on the balcony. From here we see that balcony in front of the State bedroom of Louis XIV, its rail still beautifully interwoven

with lilies and the royal monogram in bronze and gold. From where we stand the king too must have watched his wife, and in fear greater than hers : for the daughter of Maria Theresa must have gone out with some undefined hope ; she always believed in her own power, and in the goodness of the people. And she had perhaps another picture at the back of her mind of a woman in distress showing her children to a crowd : she hoped perhaps for the same passionate outburst of loyalty, to hear also "*Moriamur pro Rege Nostro . . .*" All Marie Antoinette heard was a tumult of hate and only one word plain, "*Mort—Mort à l'Autrichienne ! . . .*"

We have anticipated. But perhaps it is well to bear this picture in mind as we go through the rooms where Louis XV spent the long, luxurious years which led to such a deathbed and to such an end of the monarchy.

But we must clear our minds of history and of human lives for a moment in order to contemplate beauty of art and craftsmanship that outlives them. While in this bedroom, which Louis XVI in no way changed, get permission somehow to see a small apartment opening out of it, marked *D* in the plan and usually closed. It was the *Cabinet de garde-robe* and was decorated entirely afresh for Louis XVI by the brothers Rousseau.

Now we have seen much wood-carving in Versailles. Students can trace here a whole development of this art throughout a hundred years, from formality and symbolism on the doors of the *Salon d'Apollon*, to a greater freedom in the *Œil de Bœuf*, to exuberance here and back again to austerity of a new mysterious nature that anticipates Directoire style, in the rooms we shall still see of Marie Antoinette. Wood-carving that had been merely framework has taken its place as independent ornament. The wood-carving at Versailles is always different from that of Grinling Gibbons or from Flemish work. Whether Caffieri's or Vassé's, or Verberckt's or Rousseau's it is always distinctively French. The work in this small room surpasses all we have seen. The panels are white and the

carvings in gold—exquisite as never had been seen—for gilding too had become an art. The medallions besides enclosing the royal arms represent Agriculture, Commerce, Arts and Science and with the usual emblems. But here all is fresh: little cannons on the ships, baskets from which leaves and rose sprays have escaped, vine-leaves trailing amid grapes, wheat and flowers—and all so delicately carved they might seem to be painted. There are gardening implements and owls and cocks and grasshoppers and watering-cans and rushes. Fancy and skill have run riot, but kept pace. Hours could be spent with pleasure in this room, and it is pathetic to realize that it was only finished towards the end of things in the summer of 1789. As Monsieur Pératé remarks, it is “the last flower to bloom and the last smile in the art of Versailles.”

We must come back into the life of Louis XV and so through the bedroom into the *Cabinet de la Pendule* (127), made out of two smaller ones and so-called because of a large astronomical clock that is a marvel of mechanism, by Passemant and Dauthian, for it notes the hours the days, of the week and of the month and year, the phases of the moon, the signs of the Zodiac and the equinox and shows the movements of the planets. It is beautifully garlanded with oak leaves and acorns and roses, wrought in bronze by one of the Caffieris. Medallions in the corners represent the four seasons. An inscription on the back states that it was examined and approved by the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris on the 23rd August, 1749. It was placed in this room in 1754. Soon after the departure of Louis XIV it stopped: and the date it records everlastingly is “Jeudi 31 Octobre 1789.”

The white panelling of this room is decorated with wood-carving by Jacques Verberckt. Groups of children are playing with flowers and winding garlands. There is beautiful stucco on the ceiling, again of children amid arabesques, and shells and creepers: and a charmingly original touch is that of the birds flying in the air. There is no overcharging of ornament anywhere. Throughout

this suite of rooms we shall find a marvellous lightness and gaiety. On the mantelpiece which is of *brèche violette* stands a marble bust of Louis XIV as a child. We shall notice too a fascinating little slit of a window by which the Cour de Marbre could be watched unobserved.

The metal meridian on the floor that lights up at noon regulated all the palace clocks. The pictures over the door are by Boucher. The groups carved in wood above are by Rousseau. There are five curious tables in this room on which are figured royal forests of Compiègne, Fontainebleau, Saint Germain, Marly and Versailles. Both Louis XV and XVI were greatly interested in plans and maps and scientific appliances.

It was in this room that in the autumn of 1747 Louis XV received Charles Edward in secret audience after his tragic expedition to England.

This room, like all the others of Louis XV, lends itself to modern use. When sovereigns or great strangers visit Versailles it is exquisitely furnished in keeping with their period and used for reception and refreshment. Filled with flowers and carpets and soft curtains, they are enchanting. They were prepared with special luxury for the Emperor and Empress of Russia on their famous visit to France in 1896.

Out of this *Salon de la Pendule* room Louis XV reached the still more private rooms built around the Cour des Cerfs, so-called because of twenty-four plaster heads of stags hung around it during the childhood of Louis XV, to make Versailles more gay. In these private rooms, occupied up to the top floor, he and Louis XVI after him collected maps, models of ships, had a small observatory and near the roof a blacksmith's forge. We are only shown two of these private rooms. First comes the *Antichambre des Chiens* (128), so called because of a delightful frieze of hounds and hunting scenes on a pale blue ground, like Wedgwood china.

From here the *Escalier des Chiens* or *Escalier de la Chasse* leads downstairs through the *Salle des Gardes* (now *Salle 27*,

a part of the Museum) into the corner of the Cour de Marbre; where an attempt on Louis XV's life was made by Damiens on the 5th January, 1757.

Out of the Antichambre we come into the private *Dining Room* (129), also overlooking the Cour des Cerfs. Here the king dined with his daughters; and gave gay intimate supper-parties in the evening with Madame de Pompadour after his return from hunting; invitations being eagerly awaited, the list being read aloud during the *Débotté* of the king, the taking off of boots, in the *Salon du Conseil*. Thirty-three people were assembled here as related by the Duc de Croy on 21st February, 1756. In this dining-room are charming wood-carvings over the doors and mirrors, of garlands of flowers and attributes of music, and on the walls are eight pictures of hunting scenes painted on china by Oudry, but retouched so as to make costumes and faces contemporary, in the reign of Louis XVI. They represent the most beautiful art ever accomplished at Sèvres.

In this room are preserved two locksmith's tools used by Louis XVI. This was his own private dining-room too. In his day it contained curiosities, a very fine barometer, and a bureau the drawers of which opened to the sound of music. The gold plate used at table was kept under glass cases and the Comte d'Hezèques describes an enamelled gold hen nearly life size, lying in a little basket where fresh eggs were placed.

And so we come back into the *Salon de la Pendule* and continue our progress through the main suite. Or go by a narrow passage lined with cupboards where the wigs were kept—into the *Salon de Conseil*.

Building is a very personal art. And in the lovely *Salon de la Pendule* and the other *salon* with their chandeliers of glittering crystal and gilded mirrors all garlanded with flowers we breathe the life of its builder, imagine the voices that answered him, the steps he called, the faces he saw. But to complete that life we must ourselves go upstairs into a closer intimacy.

There was much pattering of high-heeled shoes up and down back stairs; for while Marie Leszinska led her decorous life of prayer and charity in the great rooms of the queens of France on the opposite side of the Castle, while the Dauphin worked at his bureau and Marie-Josephe sat virtuously with her embroidery frame by his side in the Cabinet de Boule downstairs, while Madame Sophie and Madame Victoire and Madame Adélaïde were spending humdrum, rather spiteful days in their backwaters at the opposite corner in the rooms where hang their portraits,—courtiers and men of letters and bishops too went eagerly and humbly enough to attend, as on a queen, at the toilet of one or other of two women not of royal birth. In succession they lived in the upper rooms, shared the king's real life, reigned over him and France.

We must see their rooms that are fairly well preserved. We come first to those that face the Parterre du Nord that were occupied by her who was immeasurably the greater of these two "Reines de la Main Gauche"—for she respected France. In fact there is much that we can admire in Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Duchesse de Pompadour. She was, it is believed, of very humble parentage, but well educated, and married the Marquis d'Etioles. In 1741 we hear of her living in seclusion at his château near Choisy reading Richardson's novels and being herself called by a friend, "Belle, blanche, douce, ma Pamela." She had a daughter whom she loved; and her own conduct seems so far to have been irreproachable. But her own plans seem to have been clear, and she drove a charming phæton, decked with pink ribbons, that happened to cross the king's path more than once when he hunted in the woods. And then she seems herself to have fallen desperately in love with him! We must remember that he was the handsomest man of his time. Marie Leszinska loved him too, so did his daughters. He was Le Bien Aimé. The phæton did some work and a costume ball at the Hôtel de Ville of Paris did the rest. She was soon installed at Versailles. This suite of hers is exactly over

(with the first floor intervening) another on the ground floor occupied by her later, until her death. Here is her dining-room intact; and in her bedroom, a fine apartment with an alcove for the bed, hangs a portrait of this fascinating person, a copy of Latour's pastel in the Louvre. Her beauty had a strange charm that was the despair of artists. None felt that they had captured it, and no portrait satisfied contemporaries. Even those who knew her disputed the colour of her eyes. Her face here is a little pale—she had a complexion of ivory we are told—her hair is powdered very white. She wears a lovely dress of white silk embroidered with gold and green sprays. The whole effect is of whiteness, of something very distinguished: “*Belle, blanche, douce.*” Her bearing is full of character. Human nature is indeed the greatest mystery in the world. This woman, in the full tide of her liaison with the king, at the height of power gained at such a price, writes from these rooms to Voltaire, “*Mon cœur est pur.*”

In this portrait she is surrounded by books, music, a globe, indicating the arts and science that indeed she actively protected. Voltaire owed much—almost his seat in the Académie—to her. Marmontel and Crebillon and Diderot were her protégés and Boucher her favourite painter. Gabriel built the Ecole Militaire under her direction. She had exquisite taste. This suite of hers was crowded with curios and works of art.

It is no wonder if the king adored her. For her he built the Petit Trianon; and another sumptuous little château almost next door to the castle (now the Hôtel des Reservoirs) and showered gifts upon her. Into his life—into those lovely sunlit rooms of his downstairs—she brought not only the sunshine of her radiant, clever beauty, but an endless variety. None knew better than Madame de Pompadour that beauty was not enough: the king must be kept amused. She realized his intellectual curiosity. So she recited scenes from new comedies, sang songs from the operas, played on her harpsichord, collected antiques, even started a farmyard to interest the king. Private

theatricals were all the rage, and she was an admirable actress. So she organized a theatre first in the Petite Galerie and afterwards in the Escalier des Ambassadeurs ; the first performance being *Tartufe*—and we imagine her in the part of Rosine. The “Théâtre des Cabinets” became an institution in the life of Versailles. No Scheherazade telling her thousand and one tales, no climber to society in Mayfair worked harder. So cleverly did she succeed and with such infinite tact that she conciliated even the queen and governed the king and France too and changed its hereditary policy. Madame de Pompadour’s political influence has doubtless been much exaggerated, but the French cannot forget that she caused Louis XV to take the part of Marie Theresa. (But then the Empress had addressed La Pompadour as “Chère Amie” and the King of Prussia had called her disrespectfully, “Sa Majeste Cotillon II.”) She corresponded with the Empress of Russia. It might be said that Europe was governed by three women : Catherine II, Marie Theresa—and Madame de Pompadour.

But her power—and you might say the fate of Europe hung by a hair, on the king’s favour. Never once could she relax in her efforts to retain it. In the end, worn-out by the strain and Court life and late hours, Madame de Pompadour died before her time in 1764. Love had long ago dulled to *amitié* and the king soon found a successor, Jeanne Becu, or Madame du Barry ; very pink and white, very good natured but of low origin and low life. The country that had jeered at La Pompadour now writhed to see its king under the sway of a milliner’s assistant.

But before we go down we must look at her rooms too. We shall see many other small rooms and corridors that were inhabited and hideously modernized by Senators during the *Commune* in 1871, after the French-Prussian war. But some are untouched, and these are *Madame du Barry’s*—white panelled, gilt-decorated. They had been formerly occupied by Marie Josephe after the Dauphin’s death. They are low in the ceiling with huge cupboards which must have been needed for the

enormous hooped gowns of those days. They have deep oval windows that overlook the Cour de Marbre. Their wood-carving is of shells and garlands in the style of Louis XV. There is a small and charming library. The most interesting historically is the dining-room where, according to anecdote and legend, were enacted the scenes that most ludicrously degraded the French monarchy, where "La France" was called sharply to attention because the coffee had boiled over. From its windows that overlook the small courtyard we are shown the little kitchens where he is even supposed to have made ragouts and pastry.

After the death of Louis XV Madame du Barry lived at Louveciennes and even tried to force an entrance into Trianon during a fête given by Marie Antoinette. Her end was ghastly. During the Revolution she escaped to England, unwisely went back to France in 1793 and was guillotined after being dragged shrieking to the scaffold amid the jeers and curses of the crowd.

As we think of her end, these white-panelled, sunny rooms have a taint about them. We prefer the bracing chill of Louis XIV's marble halls. There was grandeur and courage in his luxury. He knew how to invest even his faults with majesty.

And yet we know well that under all the cynicism and low living and false sentiment of the Regency and Louis XV—resembling the spirit of England under Charles II—the heart of France was beating. Much of the vice and cynicism and corruption was a pose. There were still honest men working for France. The aristocracy cast itself as headlong into the enemy's fire in the days of Louis XV as at the Rhine in 1674, or at Rocroy under Condé. Montcalm died heroically at Quebec; when the Revolution came there were still patriots and idealists; and at the threat of invasion France rose to fight at Valmy, as she did later in 1870 and 1914.

We come downstairs and through this *Salon de la Pendule* onwards to the *Cabinet d'Angle* or *Cabinet de*

Travail (130), a favourite, cheerful room, for its windows face both the Cour Royal and the avenues towards Paris. It was on this balcony on a wet November night that Louis XV took his valet Champloust by the arm and stood bareheaded to watch while the funeral cortège of Madame de Pompadour passed out from Versailles.

From here we can look into his small private working-room, the *Arrière Cabinet* (131), where on shelves that still exist he kept despatches and catalogues and reference books.

And so much for the rooms most distinctly associated with Louis XV: the next three with some behind them were used chiefly by his daughter. They occupy the site of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs and of the Petite Galerie built in 1685 by Louis XIV, who obliterated for the purpose a suite occupied by Madame de Montespan. The Petite Galerie was a miniature of the Galerie des Glaces. Mignard, the obstinate rival of Lebrun, had painted its ceiling. On its walls, covered with blue damask, were the finest pictures of the royal collection, among them Leonardo da Vinci's "*Mona Lisa*" and Correggio's "*Marriage of St. Catherine*".

The richest of these rooms, in fact one of the most beautiful in the castle, is the first, the *Salon de Musique* (132) or *Salon de Madame Adelaide*, the daughter whose company the king most frequented, who seems to have had the most distinct, if not the most amiable, personality of all Marie Leszinska's daughters. She occupied a suite here from 1753 to 1769 and then, as we have seen, joined Madame Victoire and Madame Sophie on the ground floor. In that northern corner, in those large, grand rooms, she must have missed bitterly all the sunshine and sweetness of this smaller one.

There is a wealth of exuberant fancy and of delicate execution in the wood-carving. Even the frames of the mirrors are twined with garlands. The medallions on four of the long white panels enclose birds and emblems of gardening and fishing and, above all, of music. The frieze on a ground slightly reminiscent of that in the

Œil de Bœuf, is made of flowers and the royal monogram and Cupids. It is a happy, beautiful room. Here Beaumarchais gave singing lessons to Madame Adélaïde, and here a greater than he, the child Mozart came with his parents in 1763 and played on the harpsichord to the princesses.

The *Bibliothèque de Louis XVI* (123) is equally attractive but more restrained, as if nothing was to detract from the main interest and purpose of the room its books. Bound in leather richly embossed and bearing the royal arms these can still be seen in the *Bibliothèque de la Ville*, the former *Ministère de la Guerre* in the rue Gambetta. (It is there that a Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1783 between England and America.) You will see the first edition of the *Encyclopédie* that helped to stir up revolution; and books of Madame du Barry: an *Almanac des Fleurs*, delightfully naïf where each month is sung by appropriate flowers and enchantingly coloured; and books of "Mesdames" with their arms enclosed inside a lozenge because they were unmarried: and older volumes of engravings to commemorate festivities of Louis XIV—the *Plaisirs des Iles Enchantées* and the *Carrousel*, held in the Place Vendôme. You will also see Masses, Motets, Suites composed for the Chapel choir and Court Orchestra, and for the ladies of St. Cyr.

This room in the château is a more manly room. And yet its white panels with gold-carved outlines and slight bands of foliage, the green-lined doors of the bookshelves, the green-and-pink carpet make a harmonious, restful scheme of colour. Here, as the Comte d'Hezèques tells us, King Louis XVI worked at a small bureau in the window, where he could stop from time to time to watch the people passing to and fro across the courtyard. The quantity of books and papers strewn upon the floor around him testify to hard work; whereas, says the Comte, it was spread abroad that the king spent his time in drinking and beating his servants and working as a blacksmith.

Above all we must look into the *Salle des Bains de Louis*

XVI. We see here some of the most beautiful wood-carving in the world, appropriately representing water scenes, dolphins, nymphs bathing, reeds and daffodils. There is an added touch of beauty round the medallions, for the gold of the rushes by some process of varnishing, is tinted faintly green or russet. We saw it already in the *Salon de Musique*.

But we will describe it in the words of Monsieur Pératé :—

“ This elegant room, borrowing a doubtful light from a back staircase, resembles nothing hitherto seen in the art of Versailles. . . . Verberckt was an admirable craftsman but he could not change, or break out into new fancies. And here, this carving in low relief by Antoine Rousseau borders on painting. These small medallions are *genre* pictures. Within a framework of rushes bound by flowers we see pastoral scenes, men, women and children rowing in boats or joining in sports by the river-side, or trying to swim, or chasing ducks in a marsh, under a cloud-swollen sky. The feeling and atmosphere of nature is perfect. And what can be more charming than the little landscapes on a gold ground in the style of the China vases then in fashion, or the duck perched on a shell upheld by dolphins, throwing up a jet of water in comical fashion ? . . . ”

Behind the shutters are amusing studies of toilet accessories, sponges, combs, scissors and a barber’s set of tools ; and above are more poetic groups of stars and little bats and owls. And yet with all this exuberance there is the French sense of measure and restraint. In Versailles *rococo* never becomes *baroque*.

The *Salon des Porcelaines* (134) was another special *salle à manger* of the king. It is an attractive, finely proportioned corner room, all white with no gilding. Baskets of flowers are carved upon the panels, and tapestries representing symbols—royal arms, fruit and flowers gain their best effect on these walls where colour is wanting. Its windows look towards the Avenue de Paris ; and also towards the Cour Royale. Here Louis XVI allowed annual exhibitions of Sèvres porcelain to be held, and nowadays the room is used as a hall for weekly lectures to the public on

the art and history of Versailles, lectures that none should miss. A full programme of them is hung in the entrance vestibules to north and south downstairs and can be seen from the courtyard. The present writer has glowing recollections of her Monday afternoons spent in this sunny room listening to Monsieur Mauricheau-Beaupré, Curator of Trianon, who understands and loves Versailles deeply, both as Frenchman and artist, and who deepened her appreciation of all art.

Thus we have seen all the rooms of Louis XV, built not like the classic halls of the Grand Monarque with the thought of France uppermost—to tell her history, to impress her greatness—but for a man's private pleasure, for himself and his women. Built in such times we wonder at their beauty as we should at flowers growing from a dunghill. And yet not only have they beauty and great value as examples of eighteenth-century art and craft, but in their way they carry on the French tradition of measure and dignity. It would seem that the spirit of France seldom sleeps at Versailles.

Out of this last room in the suite we come through a former billiard-room (136), used as serving-room during suppers in the *Salon des Porcelaines*; past a staircase that replaces inadequately the former *Escalier des Ambassadeurs* into the *Salon de Venus* and so once more back into the *Grand Siècle*.

## CHAPTER XI

### LES SALLES DU DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE

#### THE ROOMS OF THE DAUPHIN

*“Je hais Versailles. Tout le monde y est petit.”*

Montesquieu.

**I**F we come to the Escalier de Marbre into the Vestibule and turn to the right, we go through a succession of rooms on the ground floor, first on the south under those of the queen, then in the centre underneath the Galerie des Glaces and round to the north under the Appartement du Roi, with a few rooms also towards the Cour de Marbre ; in fact, the entire ground floor of Le Vau's palace. The rooms are sunny and spacious, but at once strike us as dull in comparison with those above. Indeed nothing of any importance ever happened there. They are like good-natured people. Louis XIV's son, the Grand Dauphin, first occupied them and entertained lavishly and allowed heavy gaming there. They were richly decorated by Verberckt and Mignard and Caffieri. The great artist Boule made the furniture of ebony inlaid with tortoise-shell and pewter that was their special glory. English visitors can imagine its effect by examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum. When James II visited Versailles in 1690 he was brought down specially to see these rooms. But their association for us are mainly eighteenth-century, a somnolent, fox-hunting, deep-drinking time everywhere : a relaxation after the spiritual and patriotic strain of the Grand Siècle. Queen Anne and the Georges were reigning

comfortably one after another in England, where fine, red-brick houses were being built with cedar trees and lawns outside. Wars went on in Europe but did not seem to trouble those at home. Louis XV seemed content to let things go and lose his colonies. True, minds were working more brilliantly than ever ; it was the century of Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot, of theories that led the way to action. In fact the storm was brewing. We hear it. But nothing seems to have reached the ears of the Dauphines and second sons and unmarried royal aunts who led their humdrum and decorous lives within these walls embroidering, playing picquet, watching what went on upstairs, gossiping with talebearers, giving now and then a *bal masque*, driving in huge chariots to their palaces of Meudon or Bellevue for change.

Hardly any of the decoration has survived, but they are hung throughout with portraits of their chief occupants, or of people who might have visited them during the eighteenth century.

The first one (No. 42), was *Vestibule to the Appartement du Dauphin* : a passage-room through which dishes could be brought from the kitchens to his table. But we find the Dauphine Marie-Josephe complaining of the beggars and bearers of sedan-chairs who invaded it and stopped there all day long. Here are no ornaments at all, only walls of sober brown to show up the fine portraits, chiefly by Rigaud and Largilliere. Here is Rigaud's picture of the child king, Louis XV, on his throne. It was painted in 1715, the year of his accession, and was a change of work indeed for Rigaud from the old, rigid face he had last painted above those royal robes. It is an attractive picture ; all the riches of ermine and velvet do not overwhelm the interest of the happy, childish face. It is the child king's uncle the Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, who figures most prominently on these walls. He has a lurid fame, this affable, cheerful man, he led a dissipated life ; his orgies in the Palais Royal were disgraceful. But he was undoubtedly very able. Saint-Simon

says that never through all intoxication did he reveal a State secret or say a foolish thing. He had varied tastes and played with life and lived in times where intellect was of more importance than character. He is above all reprehensible for demoralizing Louis XV, his ward, who had good instincts. Here is an inappropriate portrait of him by Santerre, in armour, listening to Minerva, and another of head and shoulders only, in red velvet and blue, by Rigaud, and a fine bust by Le Moyne, an expressive living piece of work. There is an interesting picture of him together with the little king in the famous "Cabinet de Boule." He is sitting by a beautiful inlaid gilt table. We must also glance at the fine picture of the artist Largilliere and his family.

In the next room (43) we are shown some picturesque events of the Regency. A *Lit de Justice* where the Regent is having the Sainte Chapelle and the little king is held high on a man's shoulder: and coronation scenes at Rheims; a banquet and a procession, as full of detail as a photograph, and a council of Regency in which the faces are all portraits. There are two portraits of the child Spanish Infanta, Marie Anne Victoire, a stately little person who was Louis XV's fiancée, and actually slept in the bed of the Queens of France upstairs, but while still a child was hustled back to Spain because family intriguers could not wait and urged his speedy marriage. Here are two beautiful portraits of his Polish wife, the charming Marie Leszinska, daughter of the exile, Stanislas. The French looked on the marriage as a mésalliance. She was plain, but good and charming and adored the king. He treated her badly, the only extenuating circumstance being that he was pushed into the marriage without any wish of his own. She has a sensible, dignified, charming personality in these portraits by Jean Baptiste, Van Loo. All memoirs mention her sweetness of disposition. The accessories too are charming, the little Cupid who holds her crown on a cushion, the slave wearing a turban who bears her train, and the Watteau kind of landscape at the

back. In the other, painted in 1725, she holds a lily, while a little dog at her side wears a collar with the engraved words : "Je suis à la Reine." This is by A. S. Belle (who also painted the delicious portrait of Mademoiselle de Bethisy and her brother). They are State portraits and yet, with a note of life and graciousness of the eighteenth century, compare refreshingly with the stiff presentments of Marie Theresa and Louis XIV. Between these two is Louis XV, young and seductive, on a prancing horse. The busts in this room are by Coustou, by Nogaret and Robert de Cotte.

We come next into a large white-panelled room (44) that was the "Cabinet" or private drawing-room of La Dauphine. It contains another portrait of Louis XV, painted by Rigaud in 1730, in blue velvet robes with lace and ermine, resplendent in beauty that seems already tainted. Here is a group of the Spanish royal family, of Philip V, and another happy, radiant portrait by Belle of Marie Leszinska holding the Dauphin in her arms, still by her look in the happy illusions of youth. And there are two fine portraits of councillors by Largilliere and Rigaud's portrait of the Cardinal de Fleury. There is a strong, significant, grave portrait of Said Pasha and a particularly attractive one by Roux of Madame d'Orsay as a Vestal Virgin all in white, young and lovely and shining. It is a delicate, distinguished piece of work, precursor of the semi-mythological portraits of Nattier.

The next room (45), with white panelling and gilt frames, was the bedroom of the Dauphines. Louis XVI was born here, also his two brothers, afterwards Louis XVIII and Charles X. Marie Antoinette occupied it when she first came to Versailles. Here is the portrait of the very handsome brother of Madame de Pompadour, the Directeur General des Bâtiments, in blue with powdered hair; also Boucher himself, with a roguish, ugly face painted by Roslyn; and the young, handsome poet Gresset, painted by Tocque; and we must look at the very beautiful clock of black ebony and gilt, with the horses of Apollo up above.

In Room 46 we come into the work of Nattier. Here is his masterpiece, Marie Leszinska, as an elderly, affable, dignified woman, but with no illusions left. The plain face is almost beautiful in its sincerity. The red dress with black lace is a fine study of colour. Here too is a charming Marie Josephe de Saxe, second wife of the Dauphin. Louis XVI and his brothers were her children. The old King Louis XV, her father-in-law, was very fond of her and gave her rooms near his when the Dauphin died and she had to give up this official suite. The face is brightly coloured and full of intelligence. She wears a long curl down her neck and carries a fan. Her dress is exquisite. One wonders all the dress designers of Europe do not copy it, so daring and so beautiful is its large orange-coloured fruit designed in sprays on a white ground and softened by lace and the whole enhanced by a background of Versailles. There is also Nattier's Madame de Pompadour and a charming portrait of Madame Adelaide as a young woman, tatting.

In this room we begin to have beautiful white wood-carvings on pale blue panels by Maurissant. There are some fine gouaches paintings of Versailles gardens, by Portail. We see the effect of Le Nôtre's *charmilles* at their best.

No. 47 is a small room, panelled in plain unvarnished wood. It also has beautiful carvings, especially on the shutters and near the windows. There is a rich frieze of gold stucco faintly tinged with green on white ground and a very gracefully cut chandelier. Here is only one painting, that of Marie Josephe de Saxe, older, plainer, more realistic, but still highly attractive. The rest of the room is taken up by bookcases.

No. 48, a spacious, radiant corner-room under the Salon de Paix, was the Salon du Dauphin, father of Louis XVI then, later of Louis XVI himself, and afterwards of the Comte de Provence. It has beautiful wrought-iron grille outside the window that was erected in 1747 to prevent the curious from looking in. Its six windows overlook the

Parterre du Midi and also give a fine view of the Parterre d'Eau and the landscape beyond. Here are the great Nattiers, the pride of Versailles, his portraits of the daughters of Louis XV. Madame Henriette, who died young in 1752, is in a scarlet dress, playing the 'cello; and Madame Adélaïde (whom we shall get to know into old age) is in blue, with a blue bow at her neck, and sits with an open music book in front of her and holds her finger up. Here is Madame Elizabeth, another daughter of Louis XV, twice over, with her vulgar, pretty little face, with short nose and dark eyes. We see her sitting by a tree in green hunting attire and three-cornered hat and with a white dog at her feet; and we see her in State dress of white and gold.

There are also two portraits of Madame Victoire and Madame Sophie, painted in 1747, when they were being educated at the Abbey of Fontevrault as a surprise from the king for poor Marie Leszinska.

No. 49, another beautiful room, was the Cabinet du Grand Dauphin and then of the Regent. It figures with its magnificent Boule furniture in the picture of him that we saw in the first room (42). It was here that he was seized by apoplexy in December, 1723, and died a few hours after. The room was decorated anew in 1747 as a bedroom. It was then that the frieze with cocks chanting the reveille was introduced. Some of the old carvings of Verberckt survive and the charming mantelpiece of dark marble, on which are placed carvings in bronze of Flora and Zephyr, one of Jacques Caffieri's best works. The frame of the mirror between the window is one of the most beautiful in Versailles with carvings of reeds and dolphins and garlands.

The Dauphin who first slept in this room was father to Louis XVI and died at the age of thirty-six. Appropriately there are two portraits of him here; one at the age of eighteen, the other when he was already ill. There is also a portrait of his first wife, the young Infanta, a beautiful piece of work completed posthumously, actually after his second marriage to the charming Marie Josephe de Saxe.



LOUIS XV  
By Carl van Loo



MADAME LOUISE  
By Nattier



And here in these rooms we see the last of the Nattiers, we are back in mythology. Just as we saw the Grande Mademoiselle and Louis XIV and his son as Minerva and Cupid, so here are represented Madame Henriette as Flora and Madame Adélaïde as Diana, but that which gives us most joy is the exquisite oval portrait of Madame Louise, the youngest of Louis XV's daughters, holding flowers.

It was in 1770 that this youngest, most charming and favourite daughter of the king decided to enter the Convent of the Carmelites at St. Denis. When the Archbishop of Paris told her father of her vocation he was astounded, for she was intelligent and lively; she loved luxury and pleasure. In the end with the deepest grief—for Louis XV had strong family affections—he consented to give her to God. She took the vows in the autumn of that year and became henceforth Sœur Thérèse de Saint Augustin. The king went to see her afterwards. "You have renounced all your rights and title?" he asked, moved at the sight of her in her nun's dress. She answered, "No, my father, for I keep the title of being your daughter, and my rights over your soul." These words explained her action. She went to Carmel to pray for her father.

Over the mantelpiece is a magnificent Gobelin tapestry of Louis XV at the age of sixty-one, after a painting of Louis Michel Van Loo.

Room 50 is the last of the Dauphin's suite and contains portraits of ministers under Louis XV and a charming picture of Madame Clotilde, his sister, seated on a goat with the little Comte d'Artois, afterwards Charles X, by her side. In the cornice are children on lions and the fleur-de-lis and shields with heads of animals.

And so we leave these rooms inhabited for a hundred years by heirs of the throne of France.

We come into the *Galerie Basse* (51), which in olden days was an open vestibule leading from the Cour de Marbre to the Parterre d'Eau, and afterwards was made up into rooms for the private use of Marie Antoinette. Here are scenes from the wars of Louis XV and portraits of him,

and a very fine bust of Louis XVI by Houdon, the sculptor of the famous statue of Voltaire now at the Comédie Française in Paris.

The rooms following this Galerie passed into many hands. They are most distinctly associated with "Mesdames," the unmarried daughters of Louis XV, who remained at Versailles until the Revolution; but had at one time been occupied by Madame de Pompadour and beautifully decorated with Lyons silk and Beauvais tapestry and wood-carvings by Verberckt. Here immediately below the Grand Appartement du Roi she received clever men and took part wisely or disastrously in politics until her death in 1764 and then they were occupied by Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire and Madame Sophie. Originally, in the time of Louis XIV in the first palace of Le Vau, they made up the Appartement des Bains and for their marble and carving and decoration were among the most famous in Versailles. Here and there only do we find fragments of this beauty.

In the first room (52) is the last portrait of Louis XV, as an old man, and of his three grandchildren, who all became kings of France. A striking, realistic picture represents the news of peace after the Seven Years' War being brought to the magistrates of the city of Paris. It was painted for the Hôtel de Ville and the faces of the business men and prevosts are portraits.

In the next room (53) we come into the reign of Louis XVI and here, first of all, is an interesting picture by Hubert Robert—the famous painter of ruins—of Versailles gardens in 1775, when hundreds of trees were being cut down. We are at the top of the Tapis Vert and can see the Colonnade through the space that had been and is now again thickly wooded, and on the right the statue of Milon de Crotone by Puget, since removed to the Louvre. Peasants and children are playing seesaw among the branches and disorder on the ground; and the queen, prominent in hooped white dress, caresses their children while the king, with regal, easy attitude, is talking to a courtier.

On the shutters, that can best be seen from the terrace in the evening, are beautiful wood-carvings of dolphins among fishes and flowers and the king's monogram, survivals from the time when this was the suite of bathrooms.

Here is a large picture of Marie Antoinette wearing an enormous white dress and feathers in her hair. She stands by a table holding a rose and is beautiful. Here is a fine portrait of Louis XVI at his best by Duplessis.

Room 54 was the Grand Salon de "Mesdames," daughters of Louis XV. The carvings here are by Verberckt: beautiful panels on each side of the double doors, medallions with children and baskets of flowers, a white frieze with Cupids at the corners. Here again are portraits of Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire as old women, fine, realistic presentments, in which it is difficult to recognize the young, silvery nymphs of Nattier. Madame Adélaïde is painted again near a medallion of her father and mother and a bas-relief commemorates the care she and her sister took of the king in his last illness. It was from this room that these elderly women directed bitter feelings against Marie Antoinette and watched and gossiped over her every action with the Comte d'Artois and the Comte de Provence and their wives.

In Room 55 we leave their generation altogether and come into the vivid presence of Marie Antoinette. Here are the celebrated portraits of her and her children by Madame Vigée Lebrun. In one the queen is arranging flowers, in another the Dauphin and Madame Royale are sitting on the grass with their hands together and flowers at their feet. There is the large official family portrait that was exhibited at the Salon in 1787. Madame Royale is clinging to the arm of the queen, who has the Duc de Normandie on her lap, the future Louis XVII, for the Dauphin whom we see lifting the curtain of the cradle died two years after this was painted. Near this painting is the saintly Madame Elizabeth, the king's sister, in a white dress and a cap with blue ribbons; and the treacherous Duc d'Orléans (Egalité) by Callet; and the queen's mother,

Marie Thérèse, Empress of Austria, as an old woman, dressed in black, very stately; and a small one of Marie Antoinette herself riding in military dress as she did once at a review. There is her brother, Joseph II, who visited her at Trianon and gave her much advice. There is the entire Royal Family of Austria at Schonbrunn, and there is another portrait of Marie Antoinette herself in blue silk, holding a rose.

No. 57 has marble columns, survivals of their original decoration as Salle des Bains. Later on they were the suite of Madame de Pompadour. Here are views of Royal residences, and in No. 58 are fine wood carvings. No. 59 was the former Salon des Ambassadeurs connected with the great staircase destroyed by Louis XV. In No. 58 are some interesting portraits, one of Madame Campan, daughter of the queen's librarian, reader to "Mesdames" and author of celebrated memoirs of Marie Antoinette. She is in a white dress with white powdered hair and white feather against a grey background. Here also is a portrait of Casimir Périer, *homme d'état* of the same period. This portrait was given to Versailles by Madame Sommier, his descendant, and wife of the present owner of Vaux-le-Vicomte, the well-preserved, admirably furnished palace of Fouquet, which first fired Louis XIV to enlarge Versailles.

We must leave these eighteenth-century rooms that are glowing in the late afternoon sunshine; or we shall be turned out. We linger. We cannot see unmoved these people leading their quiet lives here—we who know that France was rushing on to a horrible Revolution, and that their dynasty was to be wiped out, almost: some of them died only just in time.

Like Carlyle we hear the tramp of thousands. All through those quiet decades, 1740-1750-1760 they are tramping—nearer—nearer—to October, 1789. But Monseigneur le Dauphin heard no sound and Mesdames guessed nothing.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE OPERA AND THE ROOMS OF MARIE ANTOINETTE

#### LAST GLEAMS

*“Oh Richard, oh mon Roi,  
L’univers t’abandonne.”*

JUST as Perrault and Le Vau and Mansart are the architects of Louis XIV, the name of Mansart's nephew Jacque-Ange Gabriel is associated with the reign of Louis XV. In Paris he restored the Colonnade of the Louvre, built the Place de la Concorde and the Ecole Militaire upon plans approved by Madame de Pompadour.

In Versailles we are prejudiced against him because of his pavilion in the entrance court. We must realize that here is he judged at a disadvantage, that this was but a part of a general scheme to do what Perrault, Le Vau and Mansart had all wished—make this side of Versailles classical, in harmony with the garden façade.

Disapproval of the red-brick Louis XIII château had never ceased. Voltaire, writing in his *Temple du Goût* in 1773, calls it a “chef d’œuvre de mauvais goût.” Blondel also blamed it severely. Our own poet Gray, in a letter dated from Paris in May, 1739, writes more than scornfully. We quote the whole passage:—

“And now, if you have mind to make your peace with me, arouse ye from your megrims and your melancholies, and (for exercise is good for you) throw away your night-cap, call for your jack boots, and set out with me, last Saturday evening for Versailles—and so at eight o’clock

passing through a road speckled with vines, and villas, and hares and partridges, we arrive at the great avenue . . . with the palace itself to terminate the view ; facing which on each side of you is placed a semicircle of very handsome buildings, which form the stables. These we will not enter into, because you know we are no jockeys. Well ! and is this the great front of Versailles ? what a high heap of littleness. It is composed, as it were, of three courts all open to the eye at once, and gradually diminishing till you come to the royal apartments, which on this side present but half a dozen windows and a balcony. This last is all that can be called a front, for the rest is only great wings. The hue of all this mass is black, dirty red, and yellow ; the first proceeding from stone changed by age ; the second, from a mixture of brick ; and the last, from a profusion of tarnished gilding. You cannot see a more disagreeable *tout ensemble*. . . . We pass through this to go into the garden, and here the case is indeed altered ; nothing can be vaster and more magnificent than the back front . . . ”

At last, 1772, this glaring discrepancy was to be swept away. No longer was Versailles to have two faces. The charming pavilions of Mansart as we see them in the frontispiece were pulled down and the present one begun. A contemporary drawing of Gabriel's scheme, known as “Grand Projet,” shows that the entrance of Versailles would have been consistent and dignified ; with all its brick stone-faced, with colonnades and a dome like that of the Ecole Militaire in the centre over the king's bedroom. Knowing this we feel more respectful to Gabriel's pavilion, as part of a whole. The whole would have been cold and dull but the pavilion would not have jarred.

In any case we shall learn to admire Gabriel as he deserves in his previous work, the *Opera*. Now we have noticed constantly the want of a Court theatre in Versailles. Mansart had drawn up a plan for a great Salle de Ballets, but want of money had always been the

drawback. In the time of Louis XIV dramas had been given in the gardens or even in the Cour de Marbre. Later ones took place in the Salle des Comédies in the Cour des Princes, roughly where now is the portico into the gardens, on the south. Madame de Pompadour used Mignard's Petite Galerie or the Escalier des Ambassadeurs fitted with scenery and an auditorium removable at will. Gala performances took place in the Manège, a specially built space in Mansart's Grandes Ecuries.

In 1750, after Arnould, the celebrated machinist, had studied the principal theatres of Europe, the opera-house of Versailles was begun. Stopped in 1750, the work was taken up again in 1767 and finally completed for the celebrations of the Dauphin's wedding in 1770 with the Archduchess Marie Antoinette. Gabriel himself wrote a description of it in the *Mercure de France* of August, 1770, and says that it was intended to give a just idea of the progress of art in the reign of Louis XV. It roused enormous admiration. Madame du Deffand, writing to Horace Walpole, says: "C'est cent fois plus beau que les sept merveilles du monde."

It is built on the site long ago reserved for it by Louis XIV, at the extremity of the north wing, and the work of Gabriel is filled with the spirit of Mansart. The façade in beautiful harmony with the garden front of the palace with pillars in the centre of the étage noble, surmounted by sculptors of Pajou and trophies on the ledge above that hid the older lower roof, is also mirrored in still waters, those of the reservoir. This façade is one of the most ignored beauties of Versailles.

The interior is reached from the palace by a gallery of sculpture in the north wing. We come first into a foyer rich with bas-reliefs and symbolical figures and ornaments, all unchanged and carved by Pajou, "citoyen de Paris," who, as has been justly said, incarnates in marble the taste and grace of his time, as did Boucher and Fragonard on canvas. He was the pupil of Le Moyne (who is represented at Versailles by the roof of the Salon d'Hercule and by the

allegory in the *Salon de la Paix*). Apart from Versailles Pajou is best known by his bust of Madame du Barry and by a very striking and original Psyche, both in the Louvre.

Most of the exquisite carvings inside the theatre are also by Pajou. The hall is disposed in three tiers. Below are carved gods and goddesses; on the next are children acting scenes from famous operas and above is a bas-relief of Dance and Pleasure; and the compositions are separated by signs of the Zodiac. Corinthian pillars flank the stage and continue round the *loges*. One of the most striking and original features in the theatre is the Ionic colonnade round the upper part. The roof formerly represented Apollo, escorted by Venus and Love distributing crowns to reward art; but in 1871, when this opera-house became the Senate House, a glass roof was substituted.

The theatre was one of the most beautiful in the world, "with its wood charmingly painted green, to simulate *vert antique* marble, harmonizing delicately with the blue velvet of the *loges*, and the dull gold of banisters and capitals and bas-reliefs. The frightful red colour that has replaced these harmonies, cannot impair the beauty of its proportions and the fabulous riches of its ornamentation. It is the most beautiful theatre imaginable, the Bayreuth so often demanded for France, a Bayreuth at the gates of Paris, where the air still seems to echo tunes of Lulli and Rameau and Gluck. The foyer with its sculptured groups and its delicious bas-reliefs over the doors is not less exquisite and complete. To know the art of Pajou, one must see the opera of Versailles. . . ."

We have again quoted Monsieur de Nolhac.

The hall is a truncated oval and its acoustic properties are said to be perfect. The amphitheatre could be raised by mechanical devices to the level of the stage when needed for a ballroom, as was done on the 16th of May for the marriage festivities of the Dauphin and Marie Antoinette; and the next day it was lowered when a State performance of *persée* by Quinault and Lulli was given, and after that

successively, *Castor and Pollux* by Rameau and *Tancrède* by Voltaire.

As Monsieur Mauricheau, in his beautiful article on the Opera-House in the *Renaissance des Arts* of December, 1920, says :—

“ By this Opera-House Louis XV not only completed the work of Louis XIV but in his fine festivities carried on its splendour, we might say terminated it. The history and splendour of Versailles lies between two great feasts separated by a hundred years, ‘ Les Plaisirs de l’Ile Enchantée ’ and the wedding of him who, four years later, was to become Louis XVI.”

Racine’s *Iphigénie en Aulide* and Molière’s *Misanthrope* were acted here in 1837 when Louis Philippe inaugurated the reign of Versailles as a *Musée*. The last performance ever given was that of *Psyche* by Corneille and Molière, before Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie, in honour of their guest, the King of Spain, on the 21st of August, 1864.

Behind the stage is much machinery and rooms going down and up for many stories ; it is a strange medley of green rooms for actors and shabby, old-fashioned scenery, and cloak rooms for senators, for the National Assembly sat here in 1871 and the Senate occupied it from March, 1876, to August, 1879. Although the Senate meets in Paris now at the Palais du Luxembourg, this is still its official home, as Versailles is still the official seat of the French Government.

As we see this theatre, hideously coloured, and with an Empire tribune on the stage for the President of the Senate it is difficult to imagine its past scenes of romantic splendour.

All fade before the one of October 1st, 1789, the banquet given by officers of the Gardes du Corps to the Regiment of Flanders recently summoned to Versailles. The National Assembly was in full work. Troubles were already thick abroad. But the army was intensely loyal, and in the excitement of the banquet the officers tore out their new tricolour cockades and inserted the old white ones. The king was told that it would be a graceful attention if he and

the queen came for a few moments to the royal box. Their appearance was greeted with a passionate outburst and the singing of Blondel's song :—

“ Oh Richard, oh mon Roi,  
L'univers t'abandonne.”

It was but a small number of officers, but the news of this scene spread to Paris—Paris full of wild rumours of *coup d'états*, irritated by a scanty harvest and want of bread. It caused disproportionate excitement. It brought the mob out to Versailles four days later to fetch away the baker and the baker's wife.

We will cross over to the other side of the castle and see the *Cabinet de la Reine*, the only rooms in Versailles where Marie Antoinette was happy, though not so happy as at Trianon.

We must either go up the Escalier de Marbre or pass down the Galerie des Glaces and the Salon de la Paix, her music and cardroom and the *Chambre de la Reine* (116). Here on either side of the bed were small doors. The one on the left led to the *Œil de Bœuf* or by a private way to the king's bedroom. On the tumultuous morning in October, when the queen was awakened to face violent death, that way she fled. But in peaceful times she would have opened the other door, and in a moment, as she closed it, found herself away, far away from etiquette ; shaking off the State performance in which she partook of the king's divinity and where she belonged to France ; away from the hundred watching eyes ready to misconstrue her words, her laugh, her movements and report them to Mesdames in their rooms towards the north, or to the Duc d'Orléans the king's cousin and worst enemy in the Aile du Midi, and so to the hundred, hundred enemies she had in Paris and all over France—away from it all, alone in a suite of rooms, small and dark, but her own, where drawing a deep breath she could be herself “ Où je peux être moi ” as she said.

And what was this self, this *moi* that loomed so large, ever larger in France, so that everything that went wrong in

the State was attributed to her? A very simple, straightforward one; loving pleasure, power and admiration but full of generous instincts and directness of purpose. Marie Antoinette did not change on this side of the door, she only relaxed.

And yet it seems to us we do not see her at her best here. The chosen friends Lauzun, Guiche, Coigny, the Polignacs were not wisely chosen. The talk in these rooms was never very witty as it might well have been in that brilliantly intellectual age; for the queen herself was ignorant and emphatic. Her own talk flickered from one subject to another. Her politics were mere prejudices. She was fond of music but had no taste in art. What she enjoyed, what these gay people brought here, was the hum of Paris, above all of its theatres: and gossip, not always charitable, about society.

Altogether her life in the *Cabinets de la Reine* has been much recorded. Here she played with her children, whom she adored; was painted by Madame Vigée Lebrun; sang, and played her harpsichord, and heard Gluck play extracts from *Armida* before its performance in Paris. It was one of the grievances against her that she championed too ardently a Viennese composer. Here with Madame Bertin the famous modiste who changed all women's dress in Paris she devised headgears, for she was extremely fond of clothes and the latest, newest fashion. We are told that when she and her ladies advanced together down the Galerie des Glaces they were like a forest of nodding plumes.

But if the nobility were right in thinking that a queen of France should hold her throne in higher respect, that lightness and frivolity were disrespect to France, still there was never any cause for scandal. She filled these dingy, backyard little rooms with her laughter and light and beauty and yet with a purity that we do not feel in the sun-steeped boudoirs of Louis XV. Marie Antoinette was instinctively, fiercely pure. As Dauphine she could hardly be induced to be polite to Madame du Barry. At a hint of presumptuousness she turned out Lauzun from these very

rooms. And her most foolish escapades—the horse races, the public balls, the drives in *calèches* with the Comte d'Artois, were done just because she was so utterly removed in heart from guilt. Besides, she cared for none only for Fersen. Few knew or talked of it. That love is the one scented flower of Marie Antoinette's life.

Later she was given large rooms that faced the terrace on the ground floor—but had not long to enjoy them. In the meantime she made each tiny cage up here a gem. If the art in these Cabinets de la Reine is more foreign—or let us say not so beautifully French as the work of Louis XV's rooms, still they represent the high-water mark of decorative art under Louis XVI.

First we come in to the exquisite little octagonal *Méridienne* (122) (room in which to take the noonday *siesta*) designed by Mique, the successor of Gabriel, in 1781. Here in miniature we find the perfection of carving; loose, light sprays of flowers in bronze are laid upon the glass and flowers carved in wood and beautifully gilt, are laid upon white panels: small leaves, small flowers in exquisite proportion to the room. We have come into a doll's house, a game. Louis XIV would have laughed. Mirrors are hung opposite the windows so as to gain all possible light from the courtyard. An alcove is lined with mirrors.

The locks, the floors, the furniture all is in lovely style. On the mantelpiece is the bust of Marie Antoinette herself by Pajou, the sculptor of *Psyche*, and of Madame Du Barry and of the Versailles Opera-House, the only one in which the queen is beautiful.

The two next rooms, simpler in decoration, are libraries. For at that time the French "affected literature, philosophy and free-thinking," as Horace Walpole puts it. It was the fashion to be intellectual. So Marie Antoinette had a library chosen by Monsieur Campan. In obedience to her mother's admonition she began to read Hume's *History of England*. We never hear that she finished it. The books have been removed to the Bibliothèque de la Ville.

The *salon* is the glory of the suite, the finest example of Louis XVI art ; not more beautiful than the *Méridienne*, not so French, but more striking in its carvings, above all interesting as the last stage reached in the art of wood-carving as developed by Caffieri, Vassé and the Verberckts in succession, from richness and formality, from heavy garlands and symbolism of the seventeenth century, to the lightness, charm and exuberance of the eighteenth—and now to the restraint and mystery of the Directoire style.

This room is the work of the brothers Rousseau, the same artists who made the bathroom of Louis XVI on the other side so beautiful. But Herculaneum and Pompeii had lately been excavated and caused as much excitement as did the tomb of Tutankhamen in our own day ; and classical antiquity became the fashion. So the queen's panels here are long and narrow and the amount of decoration on them extraordinarily restrained. Sphinxes are seen on either side of tripods smoking on a pedestal ; slender chains that lead upwards to the royal arms are a miracle of delicacy, like work on coins. In the lower panels only is there gaiety and exuberance, where a vigorous little Cupid bestrides a wreath of flowers tied by ribbons to the wall. Everything in this room is in the most sensitive taste and lovely execution, the locks of the doors, the little cherubs blowing trumpets, the carved work on the small, low mantelpieces. Long mirrors and low mantelpieces gave loftiness to a room. Besides, mirror-glass has become cheaper since the seventeenth century. It has also been furnished with beautiful taste. The tapestries are from Beauvais. The clock was a gift from the queen's first great friend, the Princesse de Lamballe. The cabinet and table are of the period, the best work of Louis XVI's style. We pass through the bathroom into the little *Salon de Repos* where is a landscape painted by Marie Leszinska, signed "Marie, Reine de France," and so are shown again into the *Salle des Gardes*.

We have seen the famous *Cabinets de la Reine*. True, Marie Antoinette was to know a greater freedom ; we shall

see her happier still at Trianon, but here in the midst of work she had a refuge. Here, for an hour, or a few moments, she could let her face and voice and thoughts relax, and as she said in a letter to her mother, "Je peux être moi."



SALON DE MARIE ANTOINETTE

BATTERSEA  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARIES

## CHAPTER XIII

### LE PETIT TRIANON

*"Love did he learn in huts where poor men lie,  
His daily teachers had been woods and rills."*

Wordsworth.

THE world will always be grateful to Marie Antoinette for her Trianon. There is no spot travellers remember so tenderly when they go home. No house, not Holyrood, nor Windsor nor any garden in the world is so haunted by a vivid presence that spreads and radiates joy. None is more darkly shadowed by the tragedy to come. None rouses such a human, burning sense of injustice.

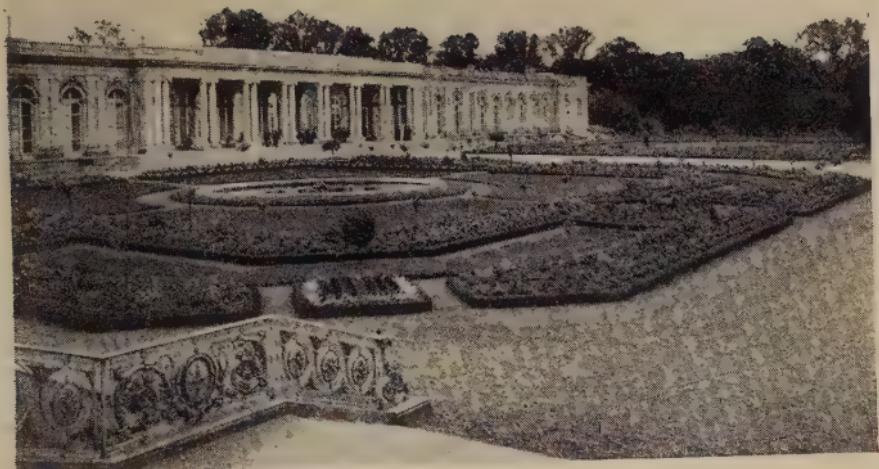
The Petit Trianon was not built for Marie Antoinette. It was a love-gift to Madame de Pompadour, but it also owed its creation to a king's love of flowers.

We have seen that at the north end of the Grand Trianon gardens, among his parterres of the "Jardin Français" as people called it afterwards, Louis XV had built in 1749 a "Pavillon de Conversation," a lovely summer house in which to dine and hear music and entertain a few friends when he visited his hot-houses and botanical collection, or followed his gardener Antoine Richard's experiments. This little pavilion with its marble balustrade around the roof, edged formerly with vases always full of flowers standing out against the sky, is among the most attractive works of Gabriel. But in order to have fuller accommodation when indulging his new tastes the king decided to build a house on the spot where at the end of the garden was a grille. So it was removed: and the foundations of the Petit Trianon were laid in 1672. But whereas the Grand Trianon a hundred

years before was built in one winter for Louis XIV—sprang up, as people said, with the flowers in spring—this much smaller house was built with great care, slowly, so as to ensure perfection.

It was not, however, the clever, cultured Madame de Pompadour who had inspired the king's love of flowers and botany and agriculture, but her successor, Madame du Barry, who cared nothing at all for these things, who enjoyed Le Petit Trianon. For in 1768, when the keys were given up by the architects, La Pompadour had been dead four years. And whereas the Grand Trianon is romantic and slightly Italian in style, the least French thing in Versailles, the sober Petit Trianon is the most French piece of building in all France. It is a gem of architecture. It is Gabriel's masterpiece and difficult to reconcile with his great cold plan for the façade of Versailles. To see it at best advantage with a trim line of trees on either side, and a background of rich green, we must come from the Grand Trianon and pause on entering the Jardin Français ; for the house—placed on a terrace, like a casket on a pediment, like Versailles—was built in proportion with that garden and to close it.

It has a frontal of four Corinthian columns with five large windows and five smaller ones in beautiful proportion. There is a balustrade to hide the roof, as in Versailles. The simplicity of its natural straight lines without a line too much is antique, from Greece ; and yet its spirit is essentially French. The whole is reminiscent of Versailles : as if Gabriel while he built could never forget Mansart ; and like Versailles it is also reflected in still waters. It was much criticized that this loveliest façade should be placed towards the gardens and not at the real entrance, but it was from them the king approached it. The plainer side towards the east is still where strangers enter, while on the west, Louis XV's and Richard's hot-houses and herbarium and vegetables came right up to the house and to be sure none could have foreseen the developments there, the future *jardin anglo-chinois* of Marie Antoinette.



GRAND TRIANON



PETIT TRIANON



To go inside the house we must follow the avenue from the Grand Trianon, passing the stables where are shown State chariots, and come in through the courtyard.

The ground floor, except for a billiard-room, was given up entirely to servants' quarters. We go up to the first floor. The staircase with its graceful lantern and rail of wrought iron, in which the initials of Marie Antoinette replaced the Du Barry's, has plain walls with garlands of oak leaves, a familiar touch, over the *Œils de Bœuf* and the sham windows that give light to passages behind ; but between the two real windows is a head of Medusa, a new feature. The door on the left leads to an entresol and a second story : that on the right to the reception-rooms.

We come first into the *Antichambre*, or Salle des Poêles, as it used to be called, because it contained the two large fire-places to warm the house : and following on are the usual suite of Grande Salle à Manger, Petit Salon, Grand Salon, Cabinet du Roi or Marie Antoinette's Boudoir, and the queen's bedroom which was formerly the Bibliothèque Botanique du Roi.

The pictures ordered by the king represented metamorphoses into flowers, the legends of Adonis, Clytie, Narcissus and Hyacinth ; though some over the doors, as in this Antichambre, are more conventionally mythological of Diana and Telemachus and Cupid. The wood-carvings are mostly by Guibert, a brother-in-law of Vernet the painter, and are again one of the glories of Trianon. Everywhere we shall see flowers and vegetables, the source of its building; but with new, original features. The shell is still to be seen at the head of panels, as in this Antichambre. But in the *Dining-room* are fruits carved in baskets and garlands. Here are the two pictures sent to Marie Antoinette by her mother recording a ballet at Schonbrunn in which she and her sisters had danced. Here too was a remarkable invention, the table designed by the architect Loriot which could descend automatically into the story down below for change of dishes while an ornamented panel of iron slipped out to fill the gap until the table came up ready served.

A convenient device, indeed, rendering all attendance unnecessary, and ensuring desirable privacy for the king's supper-parties with Madame du Barry and her friends. In fact we are struck by the extraordinary privacy gained at that time for the Petit Trianon. This small place that was to be the centre of curiosity and scandal during its later occupation by Marie Antoinette, was seldom mentioned in the *Mercure de France*, or in private correspondence, when occupied by the Bien Aimé, when scandal was most justified.

In the *Petit Salon* is a replica of a work we saw in Versailles, Pajou's bust of Marie Antoinette, the only representation which makes her really beautiful: it gives her a young, pure, enchanting face. In the *Grand Salon* are Guibert's most beautiful carvings. He has placed small wreaths of roses over the fleur-de-lis, that is treated in realistic original fashion and framed by laurels. Throughout the house there is a note of freshness in the designs, but especially here where the mantelpiece contains ram's heads and a profusion of pears and apples and grapes. All this lovely wood-carving, now a uniform grey by order of Louis Philippe, was originally pale green and in other delicate tints, picked out with gold.

This *salon* too is filled with furniture actually used by the queen; brought from Fontainebleau, or purchased from private owners. Here she had her harpsichord and gave concerts to her guests. Here the ladies embroidered and the gentlemen played cards—and without formality; at Trianon it was etiquette to have no etiquette, none even moving at her entrance. It is the most ceremonious and elegant of the rooms. The *Boudoir* altered by Mique has beautiful woodwork. Her *Chambre à Coucher*, formerly Louis XV's *Bibliothèque de Botanique*, still contains appropriate wood-carvings: roses, sunflowers, marguerites, stocks, lilies, poppies and convolvulus caught into marvellous clusters, the exquisite famous work of Guibert. Here is her bed and various relics from her use. A small *Salle de Bains* is the last room we are shown. And as we see it so

she left it. In fact the house is practically unchanged since the day when Gabriel handed its keys to Louis XV. True, it had cost enormous sums but it was perfect in taste and workmanship, also it was surpassingly pleasant to inhabit, its rooms not too large, its windows having views over a paradise of flowers and lime walks and luxuriant bowers of roses and of lilac and even a glimpse of Versailles. It was a perfectly appointed, private gentleman's house.

Louis XV did no more to it except to add the Chapel in 1772, for, through all the disorders of his life, he never neglected the observances of religion. The little building at the upper corner, just beyond the *Jardin Français*, is almost hidden by trees and the servants' quarters, we can only see its roof and belfry. There is no admission and indeed very little to see inside, being simply panelled with grey wood. There was a royal tribune with a separate entrance that is now blocked up. Two fluted Doric columns flank the altar. And over it hangs a picture by Vien of the Legend of Saint Thiebault, who is receiving Saint Louis and Margaret of Provence at the *Abbaye de Vaux des Cernay* and showing them a lily with eleven branches as a prophecy of their posterity. There is a beautiful little landscape at the back and a tree overshadows the awe-struck faces of the young couple. It is a most modern, human, interesting picture.

Louis XV had only a few years' enjoyment of Le Petit Trianon ; being taken ill there with small-pox on the 27th April, 1774. Removed to Versailles, he died on May 10th, and Trianon was the first gift of the new king to his wife. Henceforth its name is indelibly associated with that of Marie Antoinette.

Now, if all the monarchs of Versailles felt an occasional desire to escape from publicity, with her it was a constant hunger. We cannot think that she was ever happy at Versailles. Her very presence there was resented by the French aristocracy that was hostile to the Austrian marriage, arranged by Choiseul. Did not Versailles from its gateway to its ceilings and its vases show the Austrian

eagle as their traditional enemy? The position of any Austrian Dauphine would have bristled with difficulty; on the one hand, in constant touch through her mother and Mercy d'Argenseau, the ambassador, with Austria's needs and Austria's difficulties; on the other hand, suspected of sacrificing France by Madame Adélaïde, an energetic masculine person who first nicknamed her "Autrichienne." A very wise and tactful child such as the Duchesse de Bourgogne could have steered her way neatly through Scylla and Charybdis. But Marie Antoinette was not Marie Adélaïde de Savoie. She did not even realize the feeling against Austria; she herself cared nothing about politics, except when they affected those she loved. Her interferences were generally unfortunate, and from the first she made powerful enemies such as the Rohan and Soubise families.

Meanwhile, worse than all, she did not realize that if she could not help being Austrian at least she must be careful to give no other offence; and the French aristocracy had been shocked from the first. Already as Dauphine she was wild; rode a donkey and fell off and sent in glee to ask the Mistress of the Ceremonies what was the procedure when a future queen of France fell off a donkey. True, she had ceremonial instincts. Madame Campan is careful to tell us that "at her first step into the Grande Galerie she discerned to its extremity those whom she could salute with consideration, or with an inclination of the head, or with a smile calculated to console for not being entitled to greater honours." But the next day she would laugh unsuitably, or show a personal dislike. If in reaction of haughtiness she held her head extravagantly high then as Mr. Belloc says, they only thought her *bourgeoise*. The root of the matter, the beginning and the end being that she was of different race from theirs. The nation was instinctively right when they called her "l'Autrichienne," and Teuton and Latin never could agree.

They could not see her whole—as we do. They did not understand that she was sincere and generous, and loathed

meanness ; but that she was young, that she had exuberant health, and that underneath the adulation and the brilliance of their Versailles she found herself enclosed in a rigid frame of etiquette, that paralysed every movement so that she could not dress or undress or eat or drink except by rule. And can we wonder that high spirits gained the upper hand, sent her to horse-races with a lively and attractive brother-in-law, to picnics in the woods at night to see the sun rise at Marly, to masked balls at the Hôtel de Ville with amusing accidents on the way, to sleigh rides and dairy work and theatricals ? Can we wonder, knowing the character of the French, how uncompromisingly they divide women into two classes, how all this told against her ? Can we wonder, in the face of the talk and disapproval, that she hungered for the freedom of Trianon ?

Not only were will and spirit cramped at Versailles, Marie Antionette was heart-starved too. It was eight years before she had a child. Once she adopted a little peasant boy but he shrieked so loudly she had to send him home—and it was long before she had real affection or much respect for her husband, "*le pauvre homme*" as she used to call him. He was unattractive and, more mortifying still, unattracted by her, alone among the men surrounding her indifferent to her charm. He was an awkward, stout young man whose presence at her gay parties was only a restraint so that she used to put the clock on secretly to hasten his departure. So being utterly lonely, and having a strong vein of Teutonic sentimentality, she threw herself into friendships as passionate as a school-girl's, for the Princesse de Lamballe, for Madame de Dillon, for the Duchesse de Polignac. Faithful, well-tried friendships too, on her side. Even when she came to have respect and affection for her husband, as late as 1787, she wrote to the Duchesse de Polignac who was taking the waters at Bath : "I thank you, my dear heart, for your letter which has done me good. I was anxious about you . . . when you are near I feel how much I love you ; and I feel it much more when you are far away. . . . I am greatly taken up with

you and yours, and you would be very ungrateful if you did not love me, for I cannot change towards you." But even these friendships injudiciously, shamefully exploited by her friends and their friends, too openly shown by the queen herself, roused jealousies at Versailles, so that she delighted all the more to escape with these chosen ones to Trianon, so small a house that there was no room for the rest of the Court. There she could show her feelings—it was the age of "sensibility"—walk arm-in-arm like a sister with the beloved creatures; wear muslin dresses; play at the Jeu de Bagues with a few chosen courtiers, riding on sham peacocks in a Chinese roundabout; or sit down on the grass and pick the buttercups. Here far from the Court and the public, hidden among trees, in a spot that was her own, she could be free from prying eyes, safe from scandal. So thought Marie Antoinette.

At first France sympathized fully. Nature and the simple life were all the fashion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had declared that all that was necessary to man's real destiny was solitude, a vast sheet of water and the savage aspect of mountains. Especially did France sympathize when the queen became absorbed in the creation of a garden. Gardening was the rage in 1775. People visited and compared each other's. Already as Dauphine Marie Antoinette went to see that of the Maréchal Biron in the rue de Varennes, because a *magnolia grandiflora* had flowered two years running. The two brothers of the king were painted by Drouais as gardeners; the Comte de Provence is picking grapes from a vine stock and offering them to Madame d'Artois; and the Comte d'Artois, spade in hand, is offering a rare kind of plum to Madame de Provence; while the ladies themselves are dressed as shepherdesses.

The fashion took a definite, creative turn. A single chapter of a novel had set all France digging up its "parterres embroidered like a petticoat," its "canals measured by the line" and straight-cut avenues and geometrically disposed *bosquets* that Addison and Pope

had long ago belittled and that even Montesquieu had derided in his *Lettres Persanes*. The classic form, the symmetrical gardens of Le Nôtre, were hopelessly out of fashion. Rousseau in his *Nouvelle Héloïse* fixed the new type.

“ On entering a simulated meadow I was struck by the agreeable freshness of flowers blooming everywhere, of a murmuring stream, and the song of a thousand birds . . . I saw nowhere the hand of man. . . . Without order or symmetry were clumps of roses, raspberries, gooseberries, lilacs, nuts, syringa. . . . I followed tortuous paths and irregular borders where jasmine and honeysuckle mingled together apparently thrown negligently from one tree to another. . . . All these paths were bordered by a clear and limpid stream either narrow or spread broad over gravel so as to be more brilliant . . . or flowing between willow trees.”

Such was the Elysée of his Julie, the Jardin Anglo-Chinois that became a mania. Walpole looked upon it as a part of the Anglo-mania that was “ prodigious,” that introduced tea-drinking and horse-racing and sent gay parties of French travellers over the Channel. There was a deeper reason: it blended with the inner thought of the day, the *Romantique* mood—the word had lately been introduced with “ Paul et Virginie ” and a state of nature; with sensibility, the much-admired quality; with “ Pamela ” and “ Clarissa ” and the free workings of the heart.

Even at Versailles trees were planted in front of Le Nôtre’s *charmilles* to soften their straightness. The Bosquet des Bains d’Apollon was turned by Hubert Robert into a Jardin Anglais. Girardon’s famous group of Apollo and the Nymphs was placed in an artificial grotto which, with trickling streams and caverns, and moss and ivy, was held to represent the aspect of mountains with sufficient savagery. Still, in the main, Le Nôtre’s work survived in Versailles. (The present Jardin Anglais was introduced by Louis Philippe many years later and is known as the Jardin du Roi.)

In other gardens many absurdities were introduced, such as miniature villages in the background, or woods with

mock tombs in ruins so as to provoke an agreeable melancholy. Arthur Young describes a garden that he saw ornamented with "a profusion of temples, benches, grottos, columns, ruins and I know not what: I hope the French who have not been in England do not consider this as the English taste." However that may be, many of the most stately *Jardin Français* were changed into undulating meadows through which streams meandered and where sheep grazed; straight paths were made to wind tortuously and trim parterres turned into "borders where clumps of roses and gooseberries and nuts grew without order."

Few of these happy gardeners realized that their work was almost as artificial as Le Nôtre's: still less that they were really helping an enormous upheaval, setting minds unconsciously in tune with revolution, preparing the way for the Jacobins.

It is not surprising that the queen who must adopt and lead every fashion should have entered heart and soul into this new taste. She too must have her *Jardin Anglais*. Was not every inch of Trianon earth her own? Were her rules there not headed "*De par la Reine*" like those of a reigning sovereign? One who loved power dearly.

Its site was to be in the west, to take the place of Louis XV's botanical beds, that the new queen found very dull, that were straight as soldiers. The conservatories there also were pulled down and their exotic treasures sent to the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris. Richard Mique, an architect from Lorraine who had been recommended by Stanislas to Marie Leszinska, a man of great talent who had already collaborated with Hubert Robert in the erection of the grotto of the *Bains d'Apollon* in Versailles, had succeeded Gabriel and was entrusted with the work.

It was one of collaboration. As was natural the resident-director, Antoine Richard, grandson of the Irishman who had followed James II from Windsor, friend of Bernard de Jussieu and of the Prince de Croy, of all the distinguished gardeners of the day, was first asked to submit a plan for a *Jardin Anglais* for the queen's approval.

It can be seen in Paris to this day. It is a marvel of invention : the small space being so disposed as to contain an open-air theatre, a temple to Diana, a pagoda and a Chinese pigeon-house, two kiosks, Turkish baths, two rivers, three islands, as well as rocks, a lake and innumerable bowers. It is not beautiful scenically. It would have made no landscape to survey from the windows of the house. It is to the credit of Marie Antoinette's taste that she rejected this plan, choosing a simpler one, that of the Comte de Caraman whose garden in Paris in the rue Saint Dominique she had visited and greatly admired. It is his plan we see at Trianon to-day, in which a river, coming down from a high grotto, forms first a little lake, then makes a loop round the entire garden, which did not at that time include a *hameau*, passes underneath several bridges and round a little island, forming at least a peninsula not far from the house. The space could not have been disposed into a more charming, satisfying scheme. It is a landscape.

To-day it is on the north side of the house that we travellers begin our tour, past refreshment stands and crowds and perambulators: soon coming into the cool shade of trees and water, where on an island is a white, round colonnade the haunting little *Temple de l'Amour* in which Cupid is for ever busy working at a bow. The original was by Bouchardon. Cupid here is first cousin to those who are driving dolphins so charmingly through the Bassin de Neptune.

Imagine this white temple and the water round it shining at the great, blazing fête given by Marie Antoinette to the Emperor of Austria and which was said to cost such fabulous sums of the people's money. "The moats and ditches surrounding the garden," says the Baron Grimm, "were filled with blazing faggots and this light mingled with that of lanterns hidden in the thickest part of shrubs, so that the night was filled with a soft radiance, like moonlight, or the first dawn of day. Her Majesty, having had her attention drawn to this singular aurora, came down into the

gardens ; and there was agreeably surprised by the sound of celestial music, and when she followed the touching melody, found a shepherd (it was Monsieur le duc de Guyne) playing the flute ; and further on were two fauns, who played first a duet of horn and hautbois and then mingled their harmonies with those of the flute while airs were sung by other pastoral divinities."

Does it not sound like an echo of *Les Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée*? We still hear the flutes and hautbois on the wind. This is a haunted garden.

We follow the river that encircles chiefly a wide space of lawn, with trees beautifully grouped. We might indeed be in a little corner of Hyde Park or Kew. Besides, Trianon continued to be a centre of botanical study ; not of flowers and fruit but of rare trees such as catalpas and tulips and judas-trees. The Duc de Croy says that Monsieur Richard planted all those that grew upon the Alps in due succession—pines, larches, firs, alpine roses and junipers of every variety—“so that very soon the two finest, most interesting plantations of trees in the world will be those of the Queen of France and of Kew in England.” We are told that only the cedars are the actual trees under which Marie Antoinette and her ladies sat. But we see her plainly, with her muslin gown and large straw hat: we hear her light, high voice singing to the Dauphin :—

“ Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre,  
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine—”

It dies on the wind—*Mironton, mirontaine.*

We go on past the Petit Lac and see placed above it the Belvédère or Pavillon de Musique, a closed, small, octagon building reached by steps and beautifully decorated with carved emblems of hunting, gardening, flowers, a duck-hunt and allegories of the four seasons. Near it, as if to contrast the wildness of nature with the elegance of art rises the great Rocher and Grotto so dear a feature in the Jardin Anglais.

Its building was eagerly watched. Imagine the chagrin of Antoine Richard, always cast down by the rejection of his plan for the entire Jardin Anglais when the largest and most famous of Louis XV's hot-houses was pulled down to make room for it. The Duc de Croy, whose taste was old-fashioned, who preferred the gardens of Versailles, never ceased to regret the loss of this fine conservatory. In every way the Rocher gave difficulty. Fourteen models were submitted to the queen. In the one chosen, probably the work of Hubert Robert, she showed admirable taste. No sham grotto could be more picturesque or better placed.

But how the queen had had to wait! She who must always be served quickly. It is not quick or easy work to transform a garden, to make hills and lakes and islands. Besides, there were jealousies of office which she had roused, payments held back, interventions of the king. But at last, in 1781, Trianon heard the welcome sound of water rushing from the reservoir near the Grotto, over moss and stones and ivy, descending through many channels in a torrent to the lake below. The Jardin Anglais was complete.

Trianon, complete too for the time, enchanted everybody. The rocks suggested to the courtiers "those seen in Switzerland and the precipices of the Valais." The Abbé Delille, society poet of the day, describes the gardens in long, admiring poems.

" Versailles, ta pompe etonnée  
Cède aux grâces de Trianon ! "

exclaims Lebrun in his *Pindarique*. While another poet still more emphatic cries out to Versailles :—

" Disparaissez, monuments du génie,  
Parcs, jardins immortels que Le Nôtre a plantés  
De vos dehors pompeux l'exacte symétrie  
Etonne vainement mes regards attristés  
J'aime bien mieux ce désordre bizarre. . . ."

If only this *fantaisie anglaise* had not cost so much! Long before its completion, already in 1776, Mercy

d'Argenseau wrote to Marie Theresa: "The public that watched with pleasure the gift of Trianon to the queen now begins to be alarmed at the expenses incurred there by her Majesty." And just when want of money was the nightmare of the Government and the people were in misery!

If only "Madame Deficit" could have heard as we do, louder than the praises of courtiers and the lyrics of Court poets the voice of Fouquier-Tinville thundering at her judgment: "*You took advantage of your influence over your husband to appropriate money from the public funds. Where did you find the money for the furnishing and building of Le Petit Trianon? It cost enormous sums. Did you not force the Minister of Finance to give you money?*" It was money, money, all the time. Want of it that brought on the Revolution, want of it that overthrew the throne. It was money, above all things that Marie Antoinette knew always how to spend; though never in the fabulous amounts reported:—millions of francs in the orgies of one night.

It would be idle to pretend that her building and gardens at Trianon, or its most costly festivities, or even the millions she was supposed to have spent upon the diamond necklace, or any of the actions or qualities of Marie Antionette herself caused or hastened the French Revolution; but it is certain that by the time it came she had brought its fullest fury on herself, given the movement a peculiarly personal and vindictive note, filled wives and mothers with incredible cruelty. For in the eyes of the starving people she represented riches and callousness: all that was most selfish in the aristocracy; whereas we who read her letters full of excellent sentiments, know that she was compassionate; only proud of being Queen of France, ready always to believe the people good, generous with what she had to give—she and the Dauphin gave a whole year's income to the victims of the great accident at their marriage.

We shall see her at Trianon going into the houses of the poor, taking real interest, arranging marriages, giving

balls in a tent where all could enter who were decently dressed, where poor mothers brought their children, and she played with them. But it was a vague, instinctive kindness. She always overrated the glamour of royalty, the power of a queen's smile. As Dauphine, aged fifteen, she had written to her mother after a great acclamation of the mob in Paris : "How easy for people in our station to gain the love of subjects ! "

Above all, she never realized the bankruptcy of the Government. Every new minister undertook to put things right. She did not travel about the country and face facts. Calonne always gave her more money than she asked for. How could she believe in the deficit ?

The money Trianon cost was not the only trouble. Marie Antoinette did inconceivably foolish things. For instance, when she went there for three weeks into banishment having measles and to relieve the monotony, allowed four young men to keep guard in her room by night and day. It was with the king's consent. It was innocently done, Count Esterhazy in his memoirs says they only went for drives in *calèches* or in boats on the water and that he and Coigny and Bezenval and Guines slept at the Grand Trianon. But the worst was believed. She had given rich food for scandal. Can we wonder that no story was too dark to be credited of the "débauches de l'Autrichienne," that Trianon with its shady groves and grotto cunningly devised for secret assignations, was looked on as a sink of vice as well as of public money. So that in the end Trianon, that was to have shielded her from gossip and spectators, roused more horror than did all her informalities at Versailles.

But then Marie Antionette's whole career was like a Greek tragedy in which the steps taken to avert disaster only hasten it. As we have said, she seemed to have a genius for doing the wrong thing : cancelled a ball and gave the French offence who took it as mourning for an Austrian defeat ; gave a ball when the king was in grave conflict with

his Parliament and it should have been postponed. Dressed as a shepherdess she defrauded trade. Wearing jewels and high feathers she was wasting public funds.

The fact is Marie Antoinette had too much personality. That had been the trouble from the day she had arrived in France, hungry for pleasure and admiration and power and always new sensations—hungry for life—and at Versailles had found its skeleton, a place reserved for her among the shadows such as former Queens of France had been content to fill. Whereas from the first Marie Antoinette eclipsed the king. Every year her personality loomed larger, so that when the Revolution came everything that went wrong in critical stages, the recall of Necker, the dismissal of Necker, every reactionary movement of the king's, the smallest indication of foreign interference was attributed to the influence of the queen. In the memoirs of Arthur Young, who mixed with all classes, it is his second word, "The influence of the queen."

So much for later history, the harvest she herself had sown so largely at Trianon. Meanwhile her private life was entirely, indisputably virtuous. The king was there daily. When she resided there her children slept at the Grand Trianon so as to be constantly with her. History brings only innocence to light.

As for these courtiers they were a part of Court life, necessary to her pleasure, but she cared for none of them: that is just why she did these outrageous things. When Marie Antoinette did love she was more careful. Then she remembered that she was Queen of France.

There is only one secret in Marie Antoinette's life and it is a beautiful one. She loved the Swedish nobleman, Count Fersen. He was young, handsome, romantic, reserved with men and chivalrous to women. It was a strange, silent idyll between him and the Queen of France. Once when she was seated at her harpsichord and sang the passionate words of Dido,

"Ah ! que je fus bien inspirée  
Quand je vous reçus à ma cour,"



MARIE ANTOINETTE  
By Callet



LOUIS XVI  
By Duplessis



BATTERSEA  
PUBLIC  
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no power on earth could stop their eyes from meeting in a long look. Fersen loved her so deeply that he left her Court. When he volunteered for service under Lafayette in America it was in devotion towards Marie Antoinette. The Swedish ambassador, writing to his king, adds that during the last days the queen could not keep her eyes away from Fersen, and they were full of tears.

When he came back the love continued; as pure and passionate and disinterested. When the Revolution came he risked life in the queen's cause. Fersen in disguise was the coachman in the fatal flight to Varennes. Fersen spent his fortune and his strength in efforts to release her. Her death left him in despair.

Nothing in the Petit Trianon, however, gave such dismay and scandal as its theatre. The French draw an excessively sharp line between virtuous and light women. For the virtuous their claims are strict, they are prude. And no Queen of France had acted or sung in comedies before. True, private theatricals were immensely in vogue, and Marie Antoinette had been obliged to use the Grand Trianon Galerie and the Orangerie and it is not surprising that already in 1778, long before the completion of the Grotto, foundations were being dug for a new theatre of her own.

The theatre at Trianon was designed by Richard Mique and is his masterpiece. For that this name will live. It is easily overlooked, being hidden on one side by the hill of the Rocher, and on the other by the trees that border the Jardin Français. Its exterior is not striking. Only the queen's private door at the end of a shady walk, has two pretty Ionic columns supporting a pediment where Apollo is sculptured as a child between emblems of tragedy and comedy.

It was opened on the 1st of June, 1780, and was very completely equipped with machinery and stage scenery. In the auditorium are two stories of *loges* with a fine balustrade that went all round the first floor, but the semicircle is now broken by Louis Philippe's royal box. The upper row rests

on columns over scrolls charged with a lion's hide. The frieze consists of interlacing crowns and between the twelve *œils-de-bœuf* children are trailing garlands of flowers and fruit. All these sculptures are in *pâte de carton*, but are not less beautiful in design and life and workmanship. On the ceiling Apollo floats among garlands and Muses. The candelabra each side of the stage upheld by figures of women, consists of suns, roses, lilies. With its lovely hangings of pale blue and gold, under the light of a profusion of wax candles, its air filled with gay music, and the laughter of courtiers and ladies in shimmering brocades, we can imagine no setting more exquisite for the pleasure of a queen, even the loveliest and most brilliant in the world.

And how about the plays in which the Queen of France took part? They were rather mediocre. Nothing shows more plainly the poor intellectual taste led by Marie Antoinette than to compare them with those masterpieces : *Tartufe*, *Athalie*, *The Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, performed before Louis XIV. One performance only stands out, that of the *Barbier de Seville*, in which the queen took the part of Rozine, the Comte d'Artois was Figaro, and the Comte de Vaudreuil Almaviva ; but that was because of circumstances, because the name of Beaumarchais suggests another grievance that the nobles had against the queen.

It was indeed a gay company, that audience and those actors, the Polignacs, Lamballe, Adhemar and the rest. Were they all worthy of the queen's friendship? De Vaudreuil, stage-manager and best actor, did her questionable service in urging the performance of Beaumarchais' much discussed "Figaro," that attacked the Court and nobles. When the Revolution came Vaudreuil fled to England and spoke infamously of Marie Antoinette.

We cannot help seeing them all in the tragic light of history, of their end : the Princesse de Lamballe's savage death, her head held up on a spike to the prison windows of the queen, her friend, so that she stood frozen with horror, transfixed for hours—the handsome, courtly architect, Richard Mique, moving proudly round the

theatre, his creation, guillotined ; and the kind, good king himself who used to laugh so loudly at the plays, and the queen and Madame Elizabeth, all to die violent deaths ; the others fugitives ; Fersen himself to be assassinated long years after in Stockholm. Marie Antoinette had said truly : “ Je porte malheur à ceux qui m’aiment.”

Meanwhile the plays were innocent enough. *Rose et Colas*, the *Devin du Village*, *Les Fausses Infidélités*, *L’Anglais à Bordeaux*. Marie Antoinette had charming parts in them, congenial too, mostly of a peasant girl. For peasant life was the fashion. When the queen at the lifting of the curtain was seen before a table piled with washing, busy ironing—or went as a peasant girl to consult a village sorcerer, she was only repeating in play what she and her ladies delighted to do really.

We have seen that the eighteenth century interested itself theoretically in farming. Louis XV himself put his hand to the plough, and experiments in the culture and dressing of the soil and in sowing and harvesting were all made at Trianon. Not only the “ simple life ” but “ back to the land ” were current thoughts. And so throughout France noblemen and rich ladies played at shepherd life.

Arthur Young mentions his surprise at finding a lady, a viscountess, young enough to enjoy all the pleasures of Paris and living in the country, a great farmer, minding her farm. . . . “ She has probably more lucerne than any other person in Europe—250 arpents. She gave me in a most unaffected and agreeable manner, both lucerne and dairy intelligence.”

The Prince de Condé at Chantilly, the Duc d’Orléans, the Comtesse de Provence all built themselves rustic villages. So must the Queen of France.

The ground chosen for the *Hameau* was to the north of the Jardin Anglais, beyond the river. A large lake was dug, and the first building appeared in 1783 ; the *Tour de Marlborough*, a curious affair. An old simple tune, “ Malbrook s’en va-t-en guerre,” composed in 1722 on the death of the Duke in England, had been made fashionable

again by Beaumarchais in his "Mariage de Figaro." It was hummed everywhere, even by the queen's nurse to the little Dauphin. Hats, waistcoats, head-dresses were *à la Marlborough*. The Duchess of Marlborough in England collected all she could.

Hence the name of the tower that was a point of view to embrace all Trianon. The lower part in stone served as a fishery: for more than two thousand carp and twenty seven pike had been put into the lake. The fishing boat was kept moored to the foot of this tower.

Next comes the *Laiterie* where the queen and her ladies dressed in white muslin and blue ribbons used to churn the cream and shape the pats on dishes of porcelain bearing the royal arms. Near it were the farm buildings for bulls, cows, calves, sheep, goats, pigs, rabbits, pigeons and hens. Much of this is gone; as is also the house that stood near it of the keeper of the Hameau, Bersy, a Swiss.

On the other side of the lake are the houses for residence, the pretty little *Moulin* worked by the water and the *Maison de la Reine* with a thatched roof and an open gallery leading to the *Maison du Billard*. All the pretty houses had flowers at their windows and were overgrown with creepers.

There was never an imitation church at Trianon. Mique told a Versaillais he would not play at churches. But he grouped or cut his trees so well that from the Hameau could be seen the tower of Saint Antoine, and so the village landscape was complete.

Artificial? Childish? The whole thing a pose?

But how innocent a game; how fresh! How well they must have slept, those great Court ladies! How good the strawberries tasted, that poor Marie Antoinette served to the royal visitors with her own cream. Besides, what other outlet had she for her health and spirits? She had no golf or tennis. And we must remember that year in, year out, she never travelled further than St. Cloud, or Fontainebleau. She never saw the sea, or mountains, and really thought her

Grotto like the Alps. Trianon might be a pose but it led her near realities.

Marie Antoinette's life can be divided sharply into two periods, before October 6th, 1789, and after : into the long years spent almost entirely at Versailles and Trianon that were but prologue to the Revolution, a sowing if you will—and the four crowded years after that date into which this record does not follow. For on the 6th October the royal coach rumbled out of the Cour Royale and Marie Antoinette never saw Versailles again.

In the same way history divides its judgment of her. For no woman has been more discussed, despised, admired, attacked, defended, hated or adored than Marie Antoinette. None had a simpler nature. She was not in the least subtle, like Mary Queen of Scots, or Louis XIV. She was only healthy and high spirited and Teutonic. Had she died before 1789 her influence on events would have been counted as spasmodic and negligible. The impression of her person on us would be "full of life, splendour and joy," as Burke says—or like Louis XIV, "*toujours environné de lumière et de magnificence.*" And yet not altogether pleasing. We should do justice to her purity and sincerity, but we should remember her displays of petulance towards d'Aiguillon, her violent anger against the Cardinal de Rohan, her vindictiveness towards Madame Lamotte.

Burke compares her to a morning star, and so her nature glitters, clear and sparkling, but with no softness, no depth, no mystery.

Her record is different indeed in the tragic, second act. There history places her very high. And this though she seemed to have had a genius for giving the wrong advice, choosing the wrong people and for taking wrong decisions. Down to the last tragic blunder—going eastwards to Varennes when it should have been westwards to Rouen she was always putting herself in the wrong. But she showed a clear fixity of purpose, an unswerving directness of aim, a courage and determination that won even Mirabeau's admiration.

Already before the Revolution, in the last years when she spent so much time at Trianon, we see a deepening of her nature. It was at Trianon during a long walk about the garden that the Emperor of Austria, her brother, spoke plainer language to her than she had ever heard before, urging her to live more seriously, to give up her extravagances and high play. She was always full of earnestness as to the education of her children's minds and hearts, but we notice a growing affection and respect for her husband: and Louis XVI has told in his diary how constantly he was at Trianon. Did she see much of Fersen? We do not know.

But we do know that in this seclusion she came into touch with the most beautiful nature beside his that she had ever met. In Madame Elizabeth, the king's youngest sister, who had but lately joined the Court, Marie Antoinette came for the first time under the influence of religion: she saw a life of prayer and of personal, ardent faith led by a woman younger than herself. She saw even Court life made pure and beautiful and sunny by this girl—who loved her brother, Louis XVI, so devotedly she would not marry; who seems to have been sent as a guardian angel to the family; who clung to them through all the trouble and died too upon the scaffold.

If at Trianon Marie Antoinette might say again, “*Je peux être moi*,” it was a finer self, that was awakened and inspired, surely, by the breath of nature. It was better surely for her soul, and the greatness she was going to need, to be alone sometimes with the wind through her tall trees, to hear the lowing of her calves and the patois of poor children, rather than the flatteries and scandals and place-seekings of Versailles: instead of hot-house flowers to smell buttercups and hay. She did come nearer to the heart of things when she went through the dew to milk the cows—even if she did it in blue ribbons and gauze—than in her State room at Versailles, being dressed and rouged and befeathered and bejewelled by duchesses and *dames d'atours*.

Marie Antoinette never grew to be a saint ; there will never be a movement to canonize her together with Madame Elizabeth. But if when the Revolution came she showed a royal strength and dignity, who knows what stores she had been drinking from the sight of her vast sheet of water, from her purling stream and savage rock.

The queen was sitting all alone near the Grotto on the afternoon of October 5th, 1789, when a page brought news of the approaching Paris women. It was from the stillness of Trianon that she went out to face them, and the long struggle : to work through four long years and with one object only, the throne for her husband, the succession for her son ; to make egregious mistakes but to fight—and always in the thickest of the fight—to be the one man at the king's side ; to meet failure, and desertion, and a gathering darkness, and the last sharp mercy of the guillotine.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LE MUSÉE HISTORIQUE

#### “A TOUTES LES GLOIRES DE LA FRANCE”

“Consacrer l'ancienne demeure de Louis XIV à toutes les gloires de la France, rassembler dans son enceinte tous les grands souvenirs de notre histoire, tel fut le projet conçu par sa Majesté.”

From preface to first catalogue, 1837.

AT the Revolution Versailles shared the fate of its kings and was submitted to indignities. Its finest works of art were taken to the Louvre. Its beautiful furniture was sold at insultingly low prices in public auction: there must be many houses in the back streets of Versailles where tables or cupboards could record Marie Antoinette's talk, or the housemaids' gossip in top rooms of the palace.

During the Empire Napoleon occupied only the Grand Trianon, and though, as we have seen, he had many designs upon Versailles little came of them. His architect, Dufour, took away the trophies and vases from the roof of the garden façade but they were afterwards restored, and he began the pavilion in the entrance court as pendant to Gabriel's, but this was only completed in the reign of Louis XVIII in 1820. At the restoration neither Louis XVIII nor Charles X after him inhabited their birthplace where as Comte de Provence and Comte d'Artois they had spent a glittering youth—near the sun, with Marie Antoinette. They seem to have had vague purposes. Some State apartments were regilded and restored. Royalist émigrés inhabited the top stories and the wings until dispossessed by the Revolution of 1830. Versailles refused

to be tinkered with. It was a giant none could tackle. It seemed to have become aimless, an incubus to the State. There was talk of making it a hospital, or a college, and so closed to the public. It might even have been left to perish.

But Versailles was only waiting. And it was a Bourbon after all, it was Louis Philippe who soon after his accession in 1830 conceived the idea of turning the great house of Louis XIV into a portrait gallery and a collection of pictures illustrating the history of France. It was he who inscribed on its front the dedication, "A Toutes les Gloires de la France."

To this day many travellers eager to reconstruct history visit Versailles as they would go to Windsor Castle. They linger in its halls, hearing voices from the past louder than the clatter of footsteps on the uncarpeted parquet floors, louder than the foolish jokes of guides (these "licensed" guides are a scandal to Versailles). They come out of the Salle des Gardes de la Reine where the walls are still panelled with the old marbles, where the courtiers still look down over the gold rail as they looked on the mob from Paris ; their ears are full of the tumult of that October morning. "L'Autrichienne ! Où est l'Autrichienne !— Sauvez la Reine——" they hear. They wander on or up and find themselves in a loan collection in Bond Street, watching Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort landing at Treport. They had not realized that Versailles structure has two lives : its own, as Windsor has, breathed from every stone ; but also an impersonal, colourless, practical one, lending itself as a store-house from other lives, like our National Portrait Gallery or the London Museum.

It is not easy to reconcile two purposes. Though sometimes they blend finely. As when we come out of Mansart's white vestibule, having plainly seen King Louis XIV on his stately way to Mass, and find ourselves confronted with a picture of the French army dragging cannons through snow over the Saint Bernard Pass. But in the end many people leave Versailles puzzled and disconcerted, without being

sure whether they have seen an old historical monument that breathes and speaks, or a municipal picture gallery, rather dull—its subjects being entirely French and often unfamiliar. This is largely the fault of the palace itself. Louis Philippe's task was difficult.

An immense amount of learning and research as well as pride of country is expressed in these long halls with sky-lights and endless numbered rows of pictures. Louis Philippe had seized the right moment. The restoration of the French monarchy had caused or coincided with a new, enormous interest in history. Writers of genius: Thierry, Guizot, Thiers, Michelet, were making it an art, and stirring in all classes of French society a sense of its own past, making that past live, each in his own way—picturesque or philosophical, democratic or aristocratic. Politics inevitably blended with history. Their books were eagerly read, their lectures at the Sorbonne crowded. "Oh ! l'histoire," exclaims the writer of the first description of Versailles Musée, "c'est la plus grande tâche des hommes, et la plus difficile. Ni les vers du poète, ni les chefs-d'œuvre du peintre et du sculpteur, ni les merveilles de l'architecture, ne valent une page de l'histoire. Entassez dans la plus haute des pyramides Dante sur Raphael, Raphael sur Michel-Ange, un homme viendra, un historien, et en quelques lignes il aura plus fait que Dante, Raphael et Michel-Ange : il aura écrit une page d'histoire ! "

So Louis Philippe found himself in a full stream. All were eager to help. Once more the eyes of France were on Louis XIV's big house. It was like a new building of Versailles.

The work of collection was mostly done between 1833 and 1837. All sources were tapped to ensure chronological completeness. Casts were taken from funeral urns and monuments in St. Denis, and the Paris and country churches. The crown residences, the stores of the Louvre, and the Admiralty offices were searched for paintings. The Castle of Richelieu provided records of the military exploits of the Cardinal and of Louis XIII. The lofts of the

Gobelins were ransacked for cartoons of the "*Histoire du Roi*" and of "*Les Mois*." For the battles of Louis XV there were Blarenberghe's famous "gouaches." As for the Napoleonic era the Emperor had himself ordered and collected pictures of his own campaigns. To fill gaps, to paint Du Guesclin or the Crusades, or Joan of Arc, Louis Philippe enrolled in his service all living artists of France, both classic and romantic, between whom there was a feud raging worse than usual, thus following the example of Louis XIV; and if again it was not in his power to command genius the total result is at least national and the more patriotic.

Where possible pictures were placed in contemporary surroundings, thus in the Salon of Mesdames are the Nattiers, they belong to its life; in the Maintenon rooms are portraits from the Grand Siècle, in the Grand Appartement is the "*Histoire du Roi*." But elsewhere history was illustrated chronologically as in a catalogue, wherever room was found.

True, in England too, we can see pictured the defeat of the Armada, say, or the Signing of the Magna Charta, in the Royal Exchange or the Houses of Parliament, here, there and everywhere; but French children can be taken by their earnest young schoolmasters to see the great deeds of France from the baptism of Clovis to the Battle of the Marne, in one building, gaining thus an awe-inspiring sense of continuity. And we know that this history is passionately sacred history in French schools and families, where every male child born may have to fight for France when he grows up, seeing that France is always open to invasion.

True, Louis Philippe in his exterior and interior restorations did some lamentable things. He lowered the level of the Cour de Marbre, thus spoiling its proportions. Still more devastating are the sixteen colossal statues that he placed in front of the Ailes des Ministres. Just as Marie Antoinette cared nothing at all for the art of Louis XIV, so Louis Philippe did not hesitate to sacrifice

priceless eighteenth-century wood-carvings in the queen's bedroom in order to hang his tapestries in their chronological order. Exquisite work in the rooms of "Mesdames" downstairs was also destroyed in order to place pictures in straight lines. The suite of Madame de Maintenon was badly mutilated.

Even so we must bear in mind gratefully, that the citizen king not only saved Versailles, and opened its doors for ever to the French people and the world, but spent twenty-four millions of francs of his own money in the doing of it, and that his alterations might have been far worse. It is not easy to turn a huge dwelling-place into a museum. Roughly speaking, he kept the central, oldest portion of the castle as a relic of monarchy intact, and used the north and south wings for his *musée*.

Louis Philippe had to destroy literally hundreds of small rooms and entresols and corridors to form his Galerie des Batailles and his Salles de l'Histoire de France. The windows of the façade did not always correspond with the numbers of stories within the palace. For all these efforts we shall constantly be sent from north to south and upstairs and downstairs to follow French history in order through the centuries. More especially as Louis Philippe purposely turned aside, paused, sometimes, to emphasize certain periods and so to conciliate all parties: the four Salles des Croisades, for instance, being arranged to please the aristocracy and the *legitimistes*; the enormous collection dealing with Napoleon to please Imperialists, the Salle de 1792 to please Republicans.

For conscientious travellers the following guide is suggested:—

1. *Galerie de Pierre* (16) and *Salles des Croisades* (17-21).
2. *Attique du Nord* for genuine paintings from Charles VI to Louis XIV.
3. *Salles de l'Histoire de France* (2-12) on ground floor of north wing for history of France from Clovis onwards to Louis XVI. The last room (12) is devoted to War of American Independence.

4. *Salles de Madame de Maintenon* (141-143) for statesmen, princes and artists of the reign of Louis XIV.
5. *Salles du Dix-huitième Siècle* (42-58) for the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI.
6. *Cabinet des Gouaches* (137) for campaigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI, and *Salle des Etats Généraux* (139), both on first floor, reached through the *Salon de l'Abondance*.
7. *La Salle de 1792* (145), reached from the *Grande Salle des Gardes* (140).
8. *La Galerie des Batailles* (148) may be taken from that room for the sake of convenience. It covers all French history and can be visited at the end.
9. *Attique du Midi* (the first room) for the French Revolution.
10. *Aile du Nord* (84-94), first floor, for Napoleon's battles and the Empire.
11. *Aile du Midi* (67-80) ground floor for continuation of the Napoleonic era.
12. *Attique du Midi* for Restoration, second Empire and second Republic.
13. *Salles du Crimée de l'Afrique*, etc. (98-101), on first floor, reached from the *Galerie de Sculpture* (96).
14. Small rooms on the ground floor around the *Cour de Marbre* for events approaching the present day.

At this point there must come an interruption. For it is surely more suitable than elsewhere, more in tune with the thoughts of a museum to speak of a few interesting features outside the Castle. The *Town of Versailles* sprang up almost simultaneously with the palace by order of the king; as a part of his desire or policy to keep the nobility near his presence. From his camp he sent instructions to allot building grounds to all who wished. A large colony soon sprang up. In 1684 a parish church of *Notre-Dame* was built by Mansart: the foundation-stone being laid by Louis XIV; it coincided with his own religious revival so to say. Here Louis XV made his first Communion in 1722. There is the *Cathedral Church of Saint Louis* built

by Mansart's nephew in 1754. There is the famous kitchen-garden of Louis XIV, laid out by La Quintinie, that is now a school of horticulture. There is the Bibliothèque de la Ville; formerly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Rue Gambetta that was formerly the rue de la Surintendance. It contains paintings by Van Blarenberghe and one hundred and twenty thousand volumes, many of which come from the royal library. It contains also an excellently managed public reading-room. There are the royal stables built by Mansart on the Place d'Armes (difficult of admission) and the Hôtel des Reservoirs which belonged formerly to Madame de Pompadour and where the German delegates stayed in 1919. There are old houses, too, that belonged to La Bruyère and Saint-Simon and Fénelon. Nothing is left of the Salle des Menus Plaisirs in which the National Assembly met; but it stood at a corner of the Avenue de Paris, beyond the new post office. Above all there is the Salle du Jeu de Paume in a side street to the south of the Castle, reached from the Avenue de Sceaux, where the famous oath was taken by the Tiers Etat in June, 1789, and that is full of precious relics and portraits.

Within easy distance on the road past the Lac des Suisses is the Ecole des Demoiselles de Saint Cyr, now a Military Training College that is fascinating to see, with the old dormitory where Racine's *Esther* was performed, and with its tomb of Madame de Maintenon in the chapel. This, however, is only to be visited by invitation at the Cadet's annual festival, "Le Triomphe." There are lovely walks to be taken in the woods of Satory. The railway of the Ceinture takes us through it, behind Bernini's Statue, round the park and through the forest of Marly to Saint Germain, a far more beautiful route than when driving by road.

But now let us return to the Castle and go in through the Vestibule de la Chapelle to see the pictures.

Some halls are closed on stated days and the programme posted at the entrance must be studied; and some can be seen by favour of the *gardiens*, who are always courteous

and intelligent and patriotic, being wounded soldiers most of them ; and some only by authorization to be obtained at the Bureau de Conservation in the Pavillon Dufour.

Now as regards the pictures no detailed comment will be necessary, subject and artist being stated on each. We have already seen the best in the Dauphin's and the Maintenon rooms. We must not be resentful if we find no great work among those painted for Louis Philippe. Even from these the finest have long ago been removed to the Louvre. The *Musée* is not a school of art but of patriotism. We study its pictures chiefly for their subject.

We go through the *Galerie de Pierre* (16), passing casts of tombs ; of Isabella of Castille, Charles the Bold, Mary of Burgundy : and half-way through this solemn company turn to the right to the four *Salles des Croisades* (17-21).

Here on a Gothic roof, in a dim religious light every Frenchman who can prove descent from at least one ancestor in the crusades can see his own escutcheon. From the walls the best has been removed to the Louvre. Still even in these pictures painted to fill gaps by the yard the subject is so great that its treatment cannot but be interesting. At the time of their painting the upheaval of the "romantics" against the classic school of David and Ingres was at high tide. The great epic of the Crusades, with its tumultuous action, ardent feelings and, above all, an Oriental setting was intensely congenial.

Minds were full of Lamartine's "*Voyage en Orient*," of Syria as he saw it, of Lady Hester Stanhope, even of Eothen and Ivanhoe. We know that Vernet and Delacroix were deeply influenced by Ossian's legend and Constable's colouring. The renewed interest in history had spread to that of other countries. The romantic painters chose as subjects the Princes in the Tower and Queen Elizabeth as well as Joan of Arc and the battle of Taillebourg. Their leader Géricault had painted as one of his finest works a horse-race at Epsom. On the other hand, it was a young Englishman, Bonnington, who painted one of the most charming pictures of Versailles, now

hanging in the Louvre. But if pictures in these halls are very large and very crowded with figures and action at least they have the unity of a series composed to order. (So was the *Histoire du Roy!*) None is bad and the best, Delacroix' "*Entry of the Crusaders into Jerusalem*," now in the Louvre, was magnificent. The most admired at present are the "*Procession of the Crusaders*," by Schnetz, and in another room the same artist's "*Battle of Ascalon*."

We go up to the *Attique du Nord* by a staircase leading from the *Galerie de Pierre* and past the entrance to the *Opera*. From an artistic standpoint the pictures in these small rooms are the most valuable in Versailles, being genuine and the oldest. There are no real Clouets but some admirable work from his school. Those of the fifteenth century were a part of the collection of a certain Roger de Gaignères, an enthusiastic amateur, who bequeathed them to Louis XV. They were afterwards scattered but again collected by an Englishman called Crawford.

A small wood panel near the door shows Joan of Arc in armour to the left of the Virgin, her face almost obliterated, but with a nimbus round her head. Coming as it does from Orléans it is probably a votive offering.

There is a striking portrait of Charles VII, in head and shoulders only, of the Old French School. He wears a red coat edged with fur and a round hat of green velvet trimmed with gold and pearls, and the order of St. Michel (this being an anachronism). The head is very delicately drawn. The picture rouses memories of the Dauphin in *Saint Joan*, as Bernard Shaw truthfully shows him dressed.

Between the windows is a grave portrait of Luther, from the school of Cranach. He holds a prayer book in his hand. He leans against a kind of balustrade. A German inscription tells his life and concludes with the words, "Pestis eram vivus, moriens ero mors tua, papa"—"Pope, alive I was thy scourge, dying I am thy death." There is a very attractive "*Marguerite de Valois Duchesse de Savoie*" wearing a velvet toque with pearls and a feather on her fair hair. This is by Corneille de Lyon. In the following rooms

are to be seen a beautiful "*Delphine de Savoie, Duchesse de Montmorency*" and an energetic, handsome Henri II in high velvet coat and velvet cap and feather. We see Henri IV of Navarre, aged four, holding a sword, and François Probus has painted a fine one of this king in maturity, but a finer one still of Marie de Medicis (who is otherwise so familiar from the Rubens pictures in the Louvre). Here also she is figured as a large, massive woman ; she is regal and her face is clever. Monsieur de Nolhac calls it an "*Œuvre intéressante mais froide.*"

Military art begins here with twelve paintings, half plans, half pictures of battles in the career of Cardinal de Richelieu and brought from his château. We see in them almost as many figures, as well as features of the landscape finely drawn, as in a photograph. In the "*Raising of the Siege of the Ile de Rhé*" (8th November, 1627) the sea is covered with ships, and soldiers on the beach are hastening to embark. Louis XIII on horseback with his bâton in his hand faces the spectator. Richelieu, whose profile is easily recognized, is in travelling clothes, green *pourpoint* bordered with fur, big boots, red cloak and toque, and stands near the king, with an escort of cavaliers and pages, bareheaded. In the "*Siege of Rochelle*" (August–October, 1627) we have an immense amount of infinitely small detail. In the foreground are English ships attacking the dyke and repulsed by the batteries on the shore. These two pictures are identical with engravings ordered by King Louis XIII from Callot. In "*La Reprise de la Corbie*" (14th November, 1636) the royal carriage drawn by six white horses, takes the king to inspect the plans of attack. We see the arrival of provisions, fires lighted in camp kitchens and troops of besiegers and besieged geometrically disposed.

We see portraits of Louis XIII's reign, and of the Regency. We see Louis XIV himself as an infant in the arms of his beautiful nurse.

The period stops here. The subsequent reigns are in time to be illustrated in the next rooms. But now we come downstairs to the *Salles de l'Histoire de France* (2–12),

reached from the Vestibule de la Chapelle. Here is French history from the time of Charlemagne ; and the picture of this great man by Ary Scheffer is an impressive, interesting one : he is seated on his throne crowned and amply robed, dispensing laws, with Church on one side and State on the other.

The pictures in the first rooms are interesting historically, but mostly by modern artists, Schnetz, Scheffer, Vinchon and so on. But with the reign of Louis XIV we come to genuine contemporary work, incidents in the private life and reign of the king from his minority onwards : above all, battle scenes. True, J. B. Martin, "Martin des Batailles," is only represented by copies of his captures of different towns : Dunkerque, Nordlingen, Bingen, Creuznach and many others. I believe the originals are at Chantilly. Incomparably the most valuable here are the small signed paintings by Van der Meulen himself, official military artist to Louis XIV, a Dutchman who was naturalized French, and followed the king everywhere. His treatment of battles as warfare is negligible, that of a Court official. It is "*la guerre en dentelle*" ; but apart from actual war we are given details of scenery and contemporary life with all Dutch sincerity.

As Monsieur Mauricheau-Beaupré says : " Hours might be spent before these pictures by those who wish to know the great reign in all the details of daily life, from the cortèges of princes, from stately chariots, to encampments and route marches and luggage. The exactness, the picturesque treatment of these anecdotes amuse us; but we are above all delighted by the artist's sense of nature. None knew so well as he how to render the variations of atmosphere according to hours and seasons, and those distances, through which we see the towns of Flanders and Franche Comté veiled in blue by mists and yet correct as the sketches that he took upon the spot."

We ourselves think that none surpasses in charm the Surrender of Dole, that we have seen reproduced in tapestry in the *Histoire du Roi* : with wintry landscape, the

swollen river, the wind and the fine effect of the bare tree on either side, the colour of the horses and the king's coat. Perhaps it was Van der Meulen's deep luminous skies, so striking a feature in the Flanders or Dutch landscapes that inspired Le Nôtre to make sky play so large a part in the landscape of Versailles; who knows, gave him the notion of the grand perspective where sky is stretched out to infinitude?

We can follow in these ground-floor rooms the chief events of the reign of Louis XV and of Louis XVI up to the beginning of the Revolution. The last room (82) is devoted to the American War of Independence, with a statue of George Washington, a bronze reproduction of Houdon's, in the centre, and a marble bust of him, and of Lafayette. There are battle scenes and portraits of famous Americans and a fine one of Louis XVI by Duplessis.

To be strictly chronological we should have stepped up in between to the rooms of Madame de Maintenon to see the portraits of the Grand Siècle<sup>1</sup> and then to the Salles du XVIII Siècle in the central wing<sup>2</sup>. And then upstairs again.

The three rooms following the suite of Louis XV are reached through the Salon de l'Abondance. The first containing the *Salles des Gouaches* (137) was formerly the Cabinet des Médailles. The entire collection of antiques, gems and curios was transported to Paris in 1741; and when Madame de Pompadour had her "Théâtre des Cabinets" the actors used this as a dressing-room. Here are now hung the famous sketches of Van Blarenberghe, military painter of Louis XV, marvels of delicate execution of military exactitude and faithful landscape. Here under a glass case is a choir book inscribed, under the fleur-de-lis, "Enfants de France." Who knows, perhaps it belonged to one of the twelve Pages de la Musique who sang so charmingly before Marie Antoinette one Christmas Eve? In Room 138 is an interesting picture of the Revue de la Maison du Roi by Lapaon. The *Salle des Etats Généraux* (139) is so called because of a frieze picturing May 4th, 1789,

<sup>1</sup> See pages 77-80.

<sup>2</sup> See page 169.

when the States General were opened in Versailles, when nobles, clergy, commons, lawyers, deputies, king and queen, all in due order, followed as in a Panathenaic procession the Sacred Host from the church of Saint Louis in Versailles across the Place d'Armes to the Cathedral. The scene is famous in history; and in literature too, in the picturesque setting of Carlyle: and below this frieze are pictured the principal "Lits de Justice" (a kind of sessions), held throughout French history.

And here curiously there are three modern pictures. We can only imagine their position in the room to be temporary: an official, melancholy painting of the funeral of President Carnot, and two intensely moving ones of incidents in the war of 1870, the Charge of the Cuirassiers at Reichshoffen by Morot, and a portion of the Battle of Champigny by De Neuville.

To continue into the reign of Louis XVI we should go into rooms on the north, on the ground floor (55-57)<sup>1</sup> and then go up to the Attique<sup>2</sup> on the top floor of the south wing. But if we come from the queen's rooms we will look in passing, though the pictures are not chronological at the *Grande Salles des Gardes* (140).

In this room the royal bodyguard were on duty day and night. Marie Antoinette coming late from her evenings with the Princess de Polignac would see them dozing round the big fire as she passed through. Here the kings of France had to wash the feet of thirteen children and give them alms on Maunday Thursdays. The ceiling has been repainted to celebrate the Revolution. It is the only room in the central portion of the castle that Louis Philippe did not leave intact in its associations with Louis XIV.

It was formerly known as the Salle du Sacre because it contained David's famous picture of the Coronation of the Empress Joséphine that is now in the Louvre, but here is his distribution of the eagles on December 5th, 1804. Majestic and classic is the gesture of the Emperor who is thus carrying on the great Roman tradition where each

<sup>1</sup> See page 177.

<sup>2</sup> See page 225.

Legion had its eagle. Here we see him as David did and as he saw himself—the incarnation of the Roman spirit in France, made to live again in her laws and conquests, her roads and her army, but all the life of the picture is centred in the group of colonels and ensign bearers of different army corps, who rush forward with banners raised showing the eagles affixed, to swear allegiance. For the banner meant the army and the eagle meant the Emperor.

On the other wall hangs the large picture by Roll of the centenary of the States-General in 1889 when President Carnot inaugurated the Grande Eaux of the newly restored Bassin de Neptune. A ceremonial picture that is as interesting as possible. The faces are mostly portraits. There is a fine sweep of sky, and trees and water behind the crowd. Yet another huge canvas represents the great Battle of Aboukir on July 25th, 1799, with the General Murat heading a charge.

We go up to the Attique Chimay by a staircase continuing the Escalier de la Reine. There in Room 174 we find a series of portraits exceedingly interesting because contemporary. Here is one of the last ever painted of Louis XVI on horseback, portly, in scarlet, wearing the tricolour cockade on his hat and the words "La Loi" engraved on his sword. It is dated 1790 and signed Carteaux, Peintre du Roi, Officier de la Cavalerie National Parisienne. Here is also a portrait of Marat, taken on the day of his death, by David. Here is Madame Roland with rich dark hair, and an opulent, clever, pleased face, and Madame Récamier in meditative attitude under a tree, resting her head coyly on her hand, wearing innocent blue ribbons and white muslin, but showing a very alluring bare arm and shoulder. Here is the more dignified, purer face of Charlotte Corday painted after her condemnation. Few people in this room died a natural death. Here is Mirabeau, however, with a magnificent profile astonishingly like the one in wax of Louis XIV. Here is Bailly, Mayor of Paris, who received the king on the 6th October addressing

him as "Monsieur" instead of "Sire." Here is Napoleon as a young man at Arcola holding a flag. Here are poets and other writers.

We come downstairs again to the *Salle de 1792* (145). Here tradesmen in royal times were allowed to hold stalls, where courtiers could buy perfumery and stationery. It was, so to say, the village shop of Versailles. It was arranged by Louis Philippe to celebrate the year of the Battle of Valmy, when all France, of all parties, rose to repel the foreign invasion after the Declaration of Brunswick. The column of Sèvres porcelain in the centre was presented to Napoleon by the town of Paris. We cross the landing of the Escalier des Princes, but must look in passing at the Three Graces carved by Pradier, whose work we remember from the tomb of Napoleon at the Invalides, and soon come into the famous *Galerie des Batailles*, a beautiful hall in Gothic style and so not in any way inviting comparison with the Galerie des Glaces. It is nearly 400 feet long and 42 feet wide and contains thirty-three pictures and eighty busts of men who have fallen in battle.

Now it is natural that France, with her glorious military record, should have rejoiced at all times to set forth her victories in painted story, and should have seen the value of such inspiration to the passing generations that will always have to fight for her. It is natural that France should possess a long line of military painters. Nowhere so fully as at Versailles can we study the evolution of their art ; from the meticulous plans of Richelieu's battle to the finer, wider, but still official work of Van der Meulen, to the gouaches of Van Blarenberghe that should be studied through a microscope, where literally hundreds of men and houses and trees and horses are marked as small as pins, through the paintings of Martin and Lenfant and Parrocel. We have seen war treated in tidy geometrical fashion with the soldiers in straight rows and new uniforms—it was more or less the plan of battle in the mind of the general that we saw. Later on, with the painters of 1870 we shall arrive at stark realism, the grim actualities of

war in Morot's *Reichshoffen*, or De Neuville's *Bataille de Champigny*. But here in this Galerie des Batailles we are but half-way there ; still in full tide of the Romantics ; among enormous crowded compositions in which, true, all plan and geometry and order is swept away by despair or defiance or victory and yet where war is still seen with a glamour. The conception will sometimes seem *naïf*, history as Dumas saw it, and yet many of the Romantics who only attained mediocrity in other work produced excellent military paintings. Tradition, and the great subjects, swept them high.

The most striking pictures going down the left of the hall are "*The Battle of Tolbiac*" by Ary Scheffer (for Louis Philippe employed both classics and romantics), Gérard's "*Entrée de Henri Quatre à Paris*," and above all, the finest of all, Eugène Delacroix' "*Battle of Taillebourg*" (1242), where Louis IX defeated the English Army of Henry III. It is tumultuous and romantic. It is a medley of horses and men and clouds and spears. It is like Liszt at the piano, or Byron or Victor Hugo : and all the ardour and nobility of it is finely concentrated in the face of the French king riding forward relentlessly on his great white horse.

On the other side is Horace Vernet's fine "*Siege of York Town*" under Washington and Rochambeau, Heim's "*Battle of Rocroy*" fought under Condé, and Vernet's "*Battle of Wagram*" where, however, all attention is centred on a hill, where Napoleon seated on his horse looking through field-glasses at the battle in the distance. The "*Battle of Fontenoy*," so often depicted at Versailles elsewhere, is fine ; but the enormous painting by Gérard of "*Austerlitz*" is chiefly interesting because the faces are portraits.

At the end of the Galerie des Batailles is a small room dedicated chiefly to the Revolution of July, 1830, which placed Louis Philippe on the throne.

We go back into the stream of French history. We have reached the period of Napoleon.

Now travellers, whether French or English, naturally

find at Versailles what they or their own politics discover. Imperialists point ironically to the roof of the Galerie des Glaces that blazes forth the story of the Roi Soleil and are irritated to see his emblem on door and vase and shutter and ceiling. Royalists point in answer to Louis Philippe's Musée, where uncontestedly more prominence is given to Napoleon. Certainly the most ardent admirers of Bonaparte cannot complain.

We find him in almost every part of the Castle and especially in the *Aile du Nord* on the first floor (Rooms 84-93), in the *Aile du Midi* downstairs (67-80), where long suites are devoted entirely to his career.

We can follow the campaigns of 1796 in Italy almost through every engagement. Bacler d'Albe painted Rivoli and Arcola on the spot. Gros, Girodet and Guerin have painted great classic pictures of incidents in the campaign in Egypt: Bonaparte haranguing troops before the Battle of the Pyramids, and Bonaparte pardoning rebels at Cairo. While Murat himself commanded the enormous painting of the Battle of Aboukir that we saw in the Grande Salles des Gardes. Throughout the Consulate and the Empire military and civil history is continuously painted by command of Napoleon, who himself chose the battle episodes and incidents, or the speech, or the interview. They can be regarded as the true reflection of his mind.

On the whole Frenchmen must agree that there could be no wider, louder call to love of country regardless of politics than these pictures of the career of Napoleon. They are full of heroism and poetry and yet of satisfactorily correct military and local detail. Carle Vernet's "*Battle of Marengo*" has all the fire of action and yet shows its strategy clearly where Desaix attacks the Hungarian Grenadiers and Kellerman captures the rear. There will be an unfailing appeal to the deepest, simplest feeling of every generation of French soldier in the picture by Meynier of Ney restoring to men of the 76th line their old colours found in the arsenal of Innsbruck. Whereas Thevenin's picture of the Grande Armée struggling through the snows

of the St. Bernard Pass, that was exposed in the Salon of 1806, is a national epic dear for ever to French hearts. Louis XIV would have been the first to hang it in his Grand Appartement and order Lebrun to reproduce it in tapestry at the Gobelins.

There is a haunting picture of the "*Retreat from Russia*" with Ney supporting the rear-guard, where tragedy is deepened by the dreary snow upon the fir trees. In another painting it is with a proud, magnificent gesture that Napoleon dictates the Preliminaries of the Peace of Loeben. A more homely note, reminding us of Van der Meulen's little foregrounds is the "*Eve of Austerlitz*," the Emperor's bivouac, where he is interrogating prisoners, where officers are reading letters from France and soldiers are sleeping or preparing a meal. We see him, as painted by Gérard, standing by a table on which lie the Commentaries of Cæsar, his model: (did not Louis XIV, when young, also dream of a Roman Empire and pose as Cæsar in full Roman armour?) In another portrait Napoleon stands crowned and with sceptre in hand, majestic and more Roman than ever in a velvet robe strewn with bees. We see him in a fine bronze statue, a reduction of that on the Column of the Place Vendôme.

Every picturesque incident, every gracious gesture of Napoleon is set forth: we see him saluting with grave homage a convoy of the enemy's wounded; or decorating with his own hands a Russian enemy soldier presented by the Tsar Alexander. His entire marvellous legend can be built up from the galleries in Versailles.

And suddenly in a vestibule in the middle of the Aile du Midi, just when our minds are buzzing with his marches and victories and great laws and wise reforms we come upon him—himself; a marble statue of the Petit Caporal, the great, extraordinary, little man—seated in a chair at St. Helena, shrunken and dying. The face is haggard, the hands listless: it is a human, infinitely touching piece of work, "*Gli Ultimi Giorni di Napoleone*," by Vela, and sent from Turin to the Exposition Universelle, 1867.

Here politics and prejudice are stilled. The great master of the house—who died a stately, ceremonial death in the golden room he had built for himself upstairs in the heart of Versailles and France—Louis XIV himself who worked for France to his last breath, would have felt all the greatness in this man who could be so small, who was not even French and yet made France so great, and whose dying wish far off in exile was to be buried: “Sur les bords de la Seine, au milieu de ce peuple français que j’ai tant aimé,” Louis XIV would not have grudged one inch of all the space given to Napoleon in this monument: “A Toutes les Gloires de la France.”

It was at the rear of these rooms, along the Aile du Midi, that Louis Philippe had planned a museum to celebrate the “civil” virtues, the achievements of science and art and wise statesmanship in times of peace. The reproach of excessive militarism would thus have been removed from Versailles. He died before it was begun, and the plan was never carried out.

Nowadays from the vestibule we can enter the Salle du Congrès occupied by the deputies in the upper house when the Senate sat in the Opera. Since both sit in Paris this hall is now only used by both houses jointly for the election of Presidents of the Republic.

Gobelins hang on the wall; there is a lovely one of Spring, and a great picture of an historic assembly; otherwise it is simple and dignified with red leather seats in tiers, and a *tribune* which the deputies and senators mount alphabetically one by one to record their vote while others wait in the corridors, and the balconies are thronged with smart, excited ladies. At the end of the counting the newly elected President of the French Republic, the constitutional monarch takes his oath. We are shown the enormous seal that is used. He comes out into the Cour Royale full of waiting motor-cars. The troops present arms. A detachment of cavalry escorts him to Paris, the other deputies drive off. And that is all; the Cour Royale is empty, and

Louis XIV, high on his prancing horse, remains in possession of Versailles.

We go upstairs again through the Vestibule de la Chapelle and into the last Salles de l'Histoire de France following on those that deal with Napoleon, to see the chief events of the Restoration. Gérard painted the Coronation of Charles X and made an interesting scene of it, as also of Louis XVIII leaving the Tuileries on hearing of Napoleon's return from Elba. Otherwise the pictures dealing with the years till 1830 have chiefly a political interest.

Through the fine *Galerie de Sculpture* (96) we reach the seven *Salles de l'Histoire Contemporaine* (98-101) and come into the reign of Louis Philippe (1830-48). His chief military painter was Horace Vernet, and he is above all the historian of the conquest of Algeria that was undertaken vigorously when the Arabs in 1837 rose under a chieftain, Abd-el-Kader. Vernet has painted gigantic pictures full of easy imagination and incident and fine spirit, of the French captures of Bougle, of Habrah ; and above all of Constantine in 1837 : this last is painted in three parts. In the first, dealing with the 19th October, the French Army is entrenched on a summit among tombs, while the Duc de Nemours surrounded by his staff, leads the Foreign Legion to the overthrow of the Kabyles. It is a fine rendering of masses of men and among smoke and broken walls. Two more pictures deal with the actual capture of the town on the 13th October. In the first we see the assaulting column move towards a breach that the artillery have just made in the walls that stand out finely against the blue of the sky : in the second the Zouaves have scaled the height where are the first houses, and begin a hand-to-hand fight with Arabs. In another very interesting canvas we see the occupation by the French Army in 1840 of the Col de Mouzaia in a savage landscape of mountains and ravines.

But Horace Vernet's most striking achievement is his gigantic canvas picturing the capture of the Smalah, the headquarters and harem of Abd-el-Kader. The picture painted in 1847 is 70 feet in length and 16 feet in height,

and can best be studied in sections, like a panorama. It is crowded with figures and incident, with maddened cows and goats and sheep, imploring women, panic-stricken Arabs, of Chasseurs d'Afrique charging the enemy's camp at full speed, while in the centre of the scene is the Duc d'Aumale very traditional and royal yet modest on a white horse.

Another large picture of the Capture of Isly in 1844 completes this series of the African Campaign, though before we reach this room we must look at a series of small water-colours by Simeon Fort, less striking but more human, based on sketches taken by officers on the spot.

In an adjoining room are large paintings of the Crimean War ; two noticeable ones being the Passage of the Alma by Pils, a fine military picture full of movement and force, all bathed in light ; and the Capture of Inkerman by Gustave Doré, where all the light comes from an exploding shell. But the most dramatic Crimean scene is the Capture of the Redoubt of Malakoff by Yvon, a magnificent medley of men and swords with a few prominent figures in which are concentrated heroism and enormous effort and command. (It was Yvon who painted Ney's Rear-guard in the Retreat from Moscow.) And so we leave the Crimean War where English and French fought side by side, forty years after Waterloo, sixty years before the Great War.

In the room dedicated to the campaign of Italy we shall see paintings of Yvon of Magenta and Solferino ; but these are less fine than his other work. In the four smaller rooms adjoining are Couder's "*Oath taken in the Salle du Jeu de Paume*," and some interesting portraits ; and a curious clock made by Handley and Moore in London ; and Muller's rather sentimental "*Derniers Victimes de la Terreur*," where André Chenier is the central figure, and the whole scene reminds us of the Christians in the Coliseum. Lastly, there is a painting to which we must give all grateful respect and attention—that of the Inauguration of the Musée de Versailles by Louis Philippe in 1837.\*

\* This is in Salle 93, downstairs.

We go back to the *Attique du Midi* to see illustrations of the Restoration, the second Empire and the second Republic. The faces and the names become almost familiar ; our fathers or our grandfathers knew them, or talked of them. In Rooms 177 and those following are Marie Louise, the Roi de Rome, the Duchess d'Angoulême, "Madame Royale," in which it is difficult to recognize the child we saw sitting with the little Dauphin on the grass, as painted by Madame Vigée Lebrun. But yet there is a likeness to Marie Antoinette. There is the well-known portrait of Madame de Staël in a turban with dark curls ; and Louis XVIII looking extraordinarily like Louis XVI. We see Queen Victoria in poke bonnet landing at Treport to visit Louis Philippe ; and the Prince Consort by himself, handsomest of anybody ; and the Duchess of Kent. There are all the famous men and women of the second Empire, Beaudelaire, Stendhal, Ingres, Delacroix, Horace Vernet, Balzac, Gounod. There is Charles Garnier the architect of the Paris Opera-House ; and Theodore de Banville. There is an interesting picture of the Reception of the Ambassadors of Siam by Napoleon III at Fontainebleau. It seems an echo from the time of Louis XIV to see ambassadors in Oriental robes prostrating themselves as they advance with rich gifts towards the Emperor, who is seated on his throne with the beautiful Eugénie in crinoline, and the Prince Imperial, at his side. There is a small room dedicated to Thiers, his portrait and an ovation to him in 1877 : there is Victor Hugo and Jules Favre. There are two masterpieces among the portraits : that of Napoleon III by Flandrin, in which the artist has caught all that was mysterious and melancholy in the personality of the Emperor ; and a more daring scheme of colour and realistic portraiture in the Princesse Clotilde by Hebert.

At last we come to 1870. Never was France so deeply humiliated, betrayed, bewildered ; never was she so great.

We have traced military art from its beginning : from pictures where all interest is respectfully centred on the general or if possible a royal person seated on a white

horse on the top of a hill and surrounded by a brilliant staff. The fighting is suggested vaguely in the background ; from which messengers bring news of victory. In modern battle scenes the interest is shifted to the actual fighting, to the plain, grimy soldier. War is no longer decorative but frightful. Only the greatness of man's soul shines out the stronger.

There are three pictures in Versailles that express all the tragedy, the defiance and the moral greatness of 1870. One, the Battle of Champigny, is a part of a bigger picture, the Battle of La Platrière by Alphonse de Neuville and Debaille. Nothing could be less sensational. The sky is russet and smoky. In the background is a hill covered with bare trees, for it is winter : in the middle is a square plain house, from the windows of which gun-fire is blazing ; in the foreground a road and coal-carts are assembled behind which German soldiers are entrenched. The French Capitaine Forest-Defaye has fallen from his horse, mortally wounded, and two men rush towards him. On the road are French and Germans killed. It is merely an episode : a hasty battle on the way, with coal-carts as its centre, but the whole expression conveyed is one of desperate resolution, amid dreary conditions. More dramatic is Morot's "*Reichshoffen*," wherein is pictured the celebrated charge of the Cuirassiers towards a wood where lay the enemy's fire ; also an episode but as immortal as the charge of our Light Brigade at Balaklava. It moved the King of Prussia deeply, as he watched it. In the blue background we see the Vosges hills. On the left is the pine wood and the red smoke of the cannonade where all are engulfed. In the foreground are the fallen horses and their riders—dead. And yet down the centre comes the headlong rush of the cuirassiers ; a confusion—of horses, helmets, swords and grim faces—what we see plainly is a storm, a blind, rushing fury of action, a despairing love of country, a mad defiance of death.

But all 1870 seems summed up in a quiet picture by Georges Bertrand, where twilight is falling and the sky is

heavy with clouds, and cuirassiers are riding down a muddy hill. Two on foot and one on his horse are holding upright in his saddle the dead body of an officer. His livid face hangs back. His stiffened hands are gripped around a flag that is torn with shot. He seems already to be laid out. The flag will cover him. Underneath the picture is the word "*Patrie*."

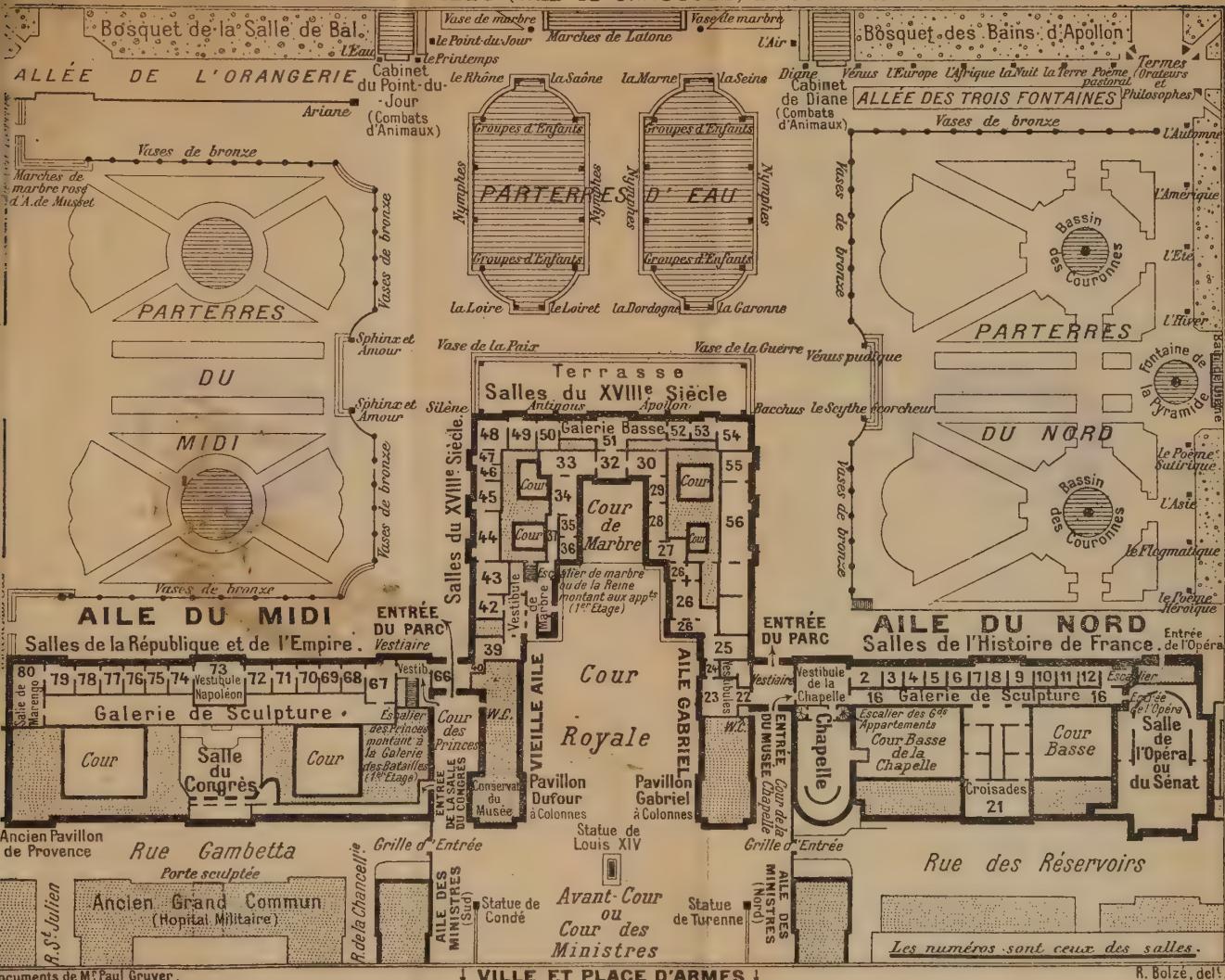
On that note we close. All Versailles is a hymn to *la Patrie*. If Louis Philippe bound it up into a manual of patriotism for school children, and a classified history for foreigners, perhaps the Grand Monarque himself would have desired no better end for the palace that he loved. It was for the glory of France—to tell the world of natural frontiers gained for her, of her unity and wealth, of all the greatness and beauty of her soul—he built it, cast her rivers in bronze and set her victories glowing in the Galerie des Glaces. The words that greet us on the façade and catch our last look as we leave—"A Toutes les Gloires de la France"—are true words. And the great king would be proud that the Versailles epic was not closed with the *Histoire du Roy*, nor with Napoleon, nor even with Reichshoffen. For the call of 1914 must have wakened him. All the Grand Siècle must have watched eagerly the struggle against a more pitiless, long invasion than France had ever suffered. Room will be found in the great house of Louis XIV to record the Marne, and Ypres, and Verdun and Douaumont.

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## CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES (BEZ-DE-CHAUSSÉE) ET PARTERRES DU PARC

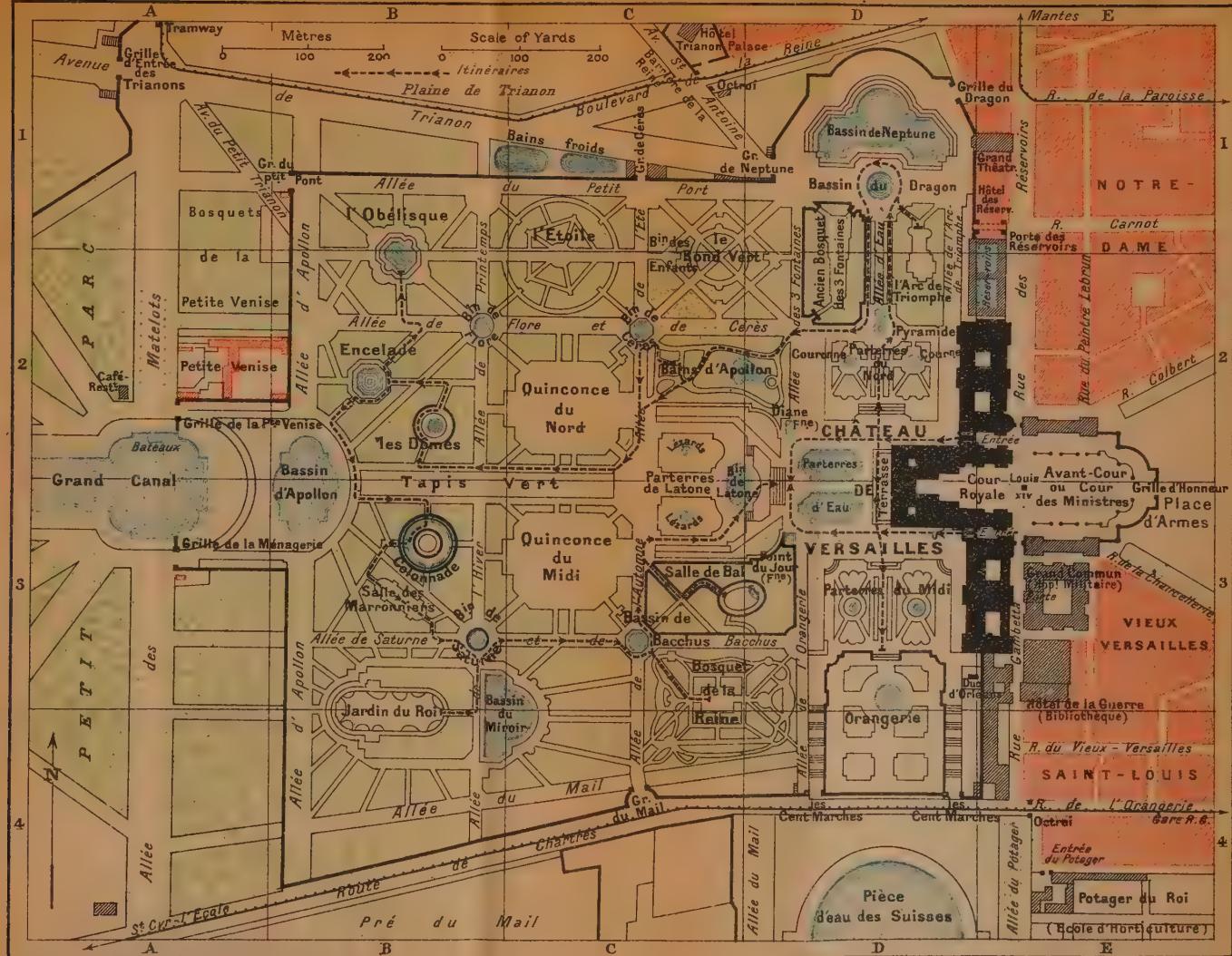


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# PLAN DES JARDINS OU PARC DE VERSAILLES

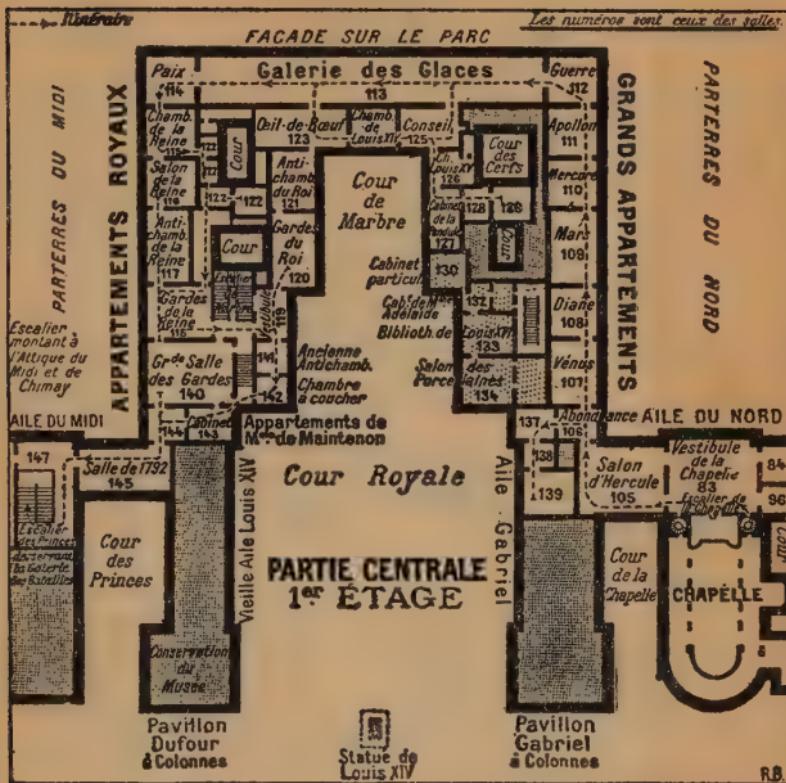


D'après les renseignements de M<sup>e</sup> Paul Gruyer

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R. Bolze del\*







# INDEX

**Abondance**, Salon de l', 23  
**Académie Française**, 18, 19, 112  
**Académie de Sculpture et de Peinture**, 18  
**Adélaïde**, Madame, 131, 173, 176, 177, 194  
 " Madame, Salon de (Salon de Musique), 165  
**Afrique**, Salle d', 231  
**Aile du Nord**, 15, 20  
**Ailes des Ministres**, 3  
 " des Princes (du Midi), 15, 184  
**Aix-la-Chapelle**, Peace of, 3  
**Allée de Ceres et de Flore**, 124  
 " d'Eau (des Marmousets), 99, 100  
 " Royale (Tapis Vert), 113  
 " des Trois Fontaines, 98  
**Américaine**, Salle de l'Indépendance, 223  
**Amour**, Temple de l', 199  
**Anglais**, Jardin, 127, 197, 198  
 " *Animaux*, Cabinets, " de, 98, 102  
**Anne of Austria**, 6, 13, 60  
**Antichambre des Chiens**, 159  
 " de la Reine (Salon du Grand Couvert), 82  
 " du Roi, 58  
**Apollon**, Bassin d', 114  
 " Bosquet des Bains d', 125, 126, 197  
 " Char d', 114  
 " Salon, 35  
**Appartement des Bains**, 176-8  
 " de Madame du Barri, 163, 164  
 " de Madame de Montespan, 165  
**Appartement de la Reine**, 81-90  
 " du Roi, 18-35  
**Arc de Triomphe**, Bosquet de l', 100  
**Armes**, Place d', 2, 4, 14  
**Arrière Cabinet**, 165  
**Artois**, Comte d', 175, 177, 196  
**Attique de Chimay**, 225  
 " du Midi, 233  
 " du Nord, 220, 221  
**Augsburg**, League of, 50, 65, 138  
**Avant Cour**, 3

**Bacchus**, Fontaine de, 126  
**Bains**, Appartement des, 176, 178  
 " de Louis XVI, 166  
**Bal**, Salle de (des Rocailles), 126  
**Ballin**, vases by, 101, 102, 103  
**Barnave**, 87  
**Barri**, Madame du, 14, 63, 163, 164, 166, 182, 185, 190  
**Bassin d'Apollon**, 114  
 " des Couronnes (Sirènes), 101  
 " du Dragon, 100  
 " de Latone, 110  
 " des Lézards, 112  
 " du Miroir, 127  
 " de Neptune, 100, 199, 225  
**Bazaine**, Marshal, 147  
**Beaumarchais**, 166, 206, 207-8  
**Belvédère** (Pavillon de Musique), 200  
**Benoist**, 30, 60  
**Bernini**, 9, 12, 28, 67, 104  
**Bertrand**, 235  
**Bibliothèque de Louis XVI**, 166  
 " de Marie Antoinette, 186  
 " de Nationale, 24  
 " de la Ville, 166, 218

Bonnington, 219  
 Bosquets, l'Arc de Triomphe, 100  
 " Bains d'Apollon, 125,  
     197  
 " Colonnade, 106, 128-  
     130, 141  
 " Domes, 125  
 " Encelade, 125  
 " l'Obelisque, 124  
 " la Reine, 127  
 " Rond Vert, 124  
 " Salle de Bal (Rocailles), 126  
 " Salle des Maronniers,  
     128  
 Bossuet, 9, 45, 154  
 Bouchardon, 199  
 Boulle, 169, 171, 174  
 Bourgogne, Duchesse de, 30, 60,  
     75, 118, 143, 145-6  
 Bronzes, 97  
 Burke, 51, 87, 209

Cabinet d'Angle, 164  
 " des Animaux, 97, 102  
 " Arrière, 165  
 " du Couchant, 140  
 " de Diane, 98  
 " de Garderode, 157  
 " de la Pendule, 158  
 Cabinets de la Reine, 185-188  
 " Théâtres des, 163  
 Caffieri, 26 (*see* Carvings)  
 Campan, Madame, 178  
 Canal, Grand, 116  
 Caraman, Comte de, 199  
 Carlyle, 155, 178, 224  
 Carnot, 224  
 Carving, Wood, 26, 35, 62-3,  
     153-4, 157, 158, 167, 173, 177,  
     187, 192  
 Cathedral of Saint Louis, 217  
 Cent Marches, 106, 141  
 Ceres, Allée de Ceres et de Flore,  
     124  
 Ceres, Fontaine de, 125  
 Chambre de Louis XIV, 59-62,  
     154, 230  
 " Louis XV, 154-7  
 " de Madame de Maintenon, 77

Chambre la Reine, 87-90  
 Champigny, Bataille de, 224, 234  
 Chantilly (*see* Condé)  
 Chapel, 4, 65-71, 75  
     " Lower Vestibule to, 20  
     " Upper Vestibule to, 20,  
     65, 67, 213  
 Chapelle, Salon de la, 139  
 Charles X, 212, 231  
 Chateaubriand, 87  
 Chimay, Attique du, 225  
 Church of Notre Dame, 217  
 Chutes d'Armes, 41  
 Classic façade, of Versailles, 15  
     " influence, 5, 9, 16, 26, 55,  
     94, 112, 122, 129, 138  
 Colbert, 8, 18, 26, 42, 48, 76, 80,  
     116  
 Colonnade, 106, 128-130  
 Colonnes, Salon des (Salon Rond),  
     140  
 Comédies, Salle des, 181  
 Commun, Grand, 4, 66  
 Condé, 25, 51, 106, 108, 222  
 Congrès, Salle du, 230  
 Conseil, Salon du, 62-65  
 Coquille, Nymphe à la, 110  
 Cotelle, 140  
 Cotte, Robert de, 21, 66, 70, 137  
 Couchant, Cabinet du, 140  
 Cour de la Chapelle, 15, 20  
     " de Marbre, 5, 12, 181, 215  
     " des Princes, 93, 181  
     " Royale, 5, 72  
 Couronnes, Bassin des (Sirènes),  
     101  
 Coustou, 20, 70, 82  
 Coypel, 68, 81, 137  
 Coysevox, 4, 12, 29, 38, 56, 79,  
     95-6, 101, 129, 151, 153  
 Crimée, Salle de, 232  
 Croisades, Salle des, 216, 219  
 Croy, Duc de, 121, 155, 200, 201

Dangeau, Marquis de, 20, 79,  
     125  
 Dauphin (Father of Louis XVI,  
     Louis XVIII, Charles X), 173,  
     174  
 Dauphin, Grand, 29, 169, 174  
 David, 219, 224, 225

Delacroix, 219, 220, 227  
 De la Fosse, 28, 35, 40  
 Delille, Abbé, 201  
 De Neuville, 224, 227, 234  
 Diane, Cabinet (Fontaine) de Diane, 98, 109  
 , , , Salon de, 28  
 Domes, Bosquet des, 125  
 Dragon, Bassin du, 100  
 Dufour, 3, 212

École de St. Cyr, 75, 103, 146, 218  
 Ecuries, 2, 4, 66, 180, 181  
 Elisabeth, Madame, 177, 210-211  
 Encelade, Fontaine d', 125  
 "Enveloppe," L', 15  
 Escalier des Ambassadeurs, 12, 40, 73, 168  
 , , , des Chiens, 159  
 , , , de Marbre, 73, 169, 184  
 , , , des Princes, 226  
 Etats Généraux, Salle des, 223  
 Etoile, Bosquet de l', 124  
 Eugénie, Empress, 147, 233

Farnese Palace, 39, 42  
 Fénelon, 31, 78  
 Fersen, Comte Axel de, 86, 87, 186, 204-5  
 Flandrin, 233  
 Flore, Fontaine de, 125  
 , , , Palais de, 136  
 Fontaines de Bacchus, 126  
 , , , de Ceres, 125  
 , , , d'Encelade, 125  
 , , , de l'Etoile, 124  
 , , , de Flore, 125  
 , , , de l'Île des Enfants, 124  
 , , , des Lézards, 109  
 , , , des Nymphes, 145  
 , , , de l'Obélisque, 124  
 , , , du Point du Jour, 110  
 , , , des Pyramides, 110  
 , , , de Saturne, 126  
 Fontainebleau, 8, 9, 43  
 Fouquet (and Vaux-le-Vicomte), 7, 8, 76, 92, 105, 108, 178

Frais, Salon, 140  
 Français, Jardin, 146, 189  
 , , , Pavillon, 146, 189 (de Conversation)  
 Fouquier-Tinville, 202

Gabriel, Jacque-Ange, 3, 146, 178, 180, 181, 189, 192  
 Galerie des Batailles, 226, 227  
 , , , Basse, 175  
 , , , des Glaces, 16, 38-53, 132, 234  
 , , , Petite, 39, 153, 163, 165  
 , , , de Pierre, 219  
 , , , de Sculpture, 181, 231  
 Garden, Style of French, 94  
 Gardening, Treatise of Modern, 120  
 Gardens, Eighteenth-century, 196-198  
 Gardes, Grande Salle des, 224  
 Gardes, de la Reine, Salle des, 80  
 , , , du Roi, Salle des, 58  
 Gérard, 231  
 Gericault, 219  
 Girardon, 12, 37, 99, 129, 197  
 Glaces, Salon des, 139  
 Gobelins, 18, 19, 34, 84, (and see "Tapestries")  
 Gouaches (see Van Blarenberghe)  
 Grand Appartement du Roi, 18-35  
 "Grand Bourbon," 105  
 Grand Canal, 115  
 , , , Commun, 4, 106  
 "Grand Projet," 180  
 , , , Salon, 140  
 Grand Trianon, 140-142  
 Grande Mademoiselle, La, 25, 44, 55, 58, 59, 76  
 Gray, Thomas, 9, 179  
 Grimm, 199  
 Grinling Gibbons, 63, 157  
 Grotte de Thetis, 20, 111  
 , , , de Trianon, 201, 211  
 , , , (see d'Apollon)  
 Guerre, Salon de la, 36-38  
 , , , Vase de la, 95  
 Guibert, 219  
 Guizot, 214

*Hameau* de Marie Antoinette, 207, 208  
 Henriette d'Angleterre, 55, 58  
 Hercule, Salon d', 20-23, 152  
 Hezèques, Comte d', 57, 153, 166  
*Histoire de France*, Salles de l', 222, 228-9  
 " *Contemporaine*, Salles de l', 231  
 " *du Roi*, 34, 86, 215, 235  
*History*, New study of, 214  
*Hôtel des Reservoirs*, 162  
 " *de Ville*, 12  
 Houasse, 24, 137  
 Houdon, 176  
  
 Île des Enfants, 124  
 Inigo Jones, 7, 9, 40, 106  
  
 James II, 24, 50, 137, 169  
 Jardin Anglais, 127, 197, 198  
 " *Français*, 146, 189  
 " *du Roi*, 127, 141  
 Jardins, Salon des, 142  
 Jeu de Paume, Salle du, 218  
 Jouvenet, 28, 68, 137  
 Jussieu, Bernard de, 198  
  
 Keller, The brothers, 96  
 King of Spain, Duc d'Anjou, 33, 62  
  
 Lac des Suisses, 104  
 Lafayette, 14, 89, 117  
 La Fontaine, 20, 79  
 Lamballe, Princesse de, 130, 187, 195, 206  
 Lambert, Hôtel, 39  
 Latone, Fontaine de, 111  
 " *Parterre de (Parterre Bas)*, 110  
 Lebrun, Charles, 17, 26, 36, 40-43, 45, 51, 77, 83, 84, 98, 109, 114, 122, 132, 138, 153  
 Le Hongre, 76, 96, 98, 99  
 Le Moyné, 22, 52, 143, 171, 181  
 Le Notre, Andre, 7, 17, 91-92, 94, 99, 104-5, 120-122, 129, 144, 198  
 Lettres Persanes, 197  
 Le Vau, 8, 11, 19, 73, 81  
 Lézards, Fontaine des, 112  
 Louis XIII, 6, 9, 93, 179, 221  
 Louis XIV—  
     Birth (the Dieu-Donné), 7  
     Appearance, 29, 44, 51, 80  
     As Art patron, 20, 23, 25, 48, 132  
     Education, 48  
     Love of—  
         building, 7, 72, 135  
         children, 30, 56, 103  
         flowers, 49, 69, 105, 117, 145  
         France, 18, 42, 43, 48, 61, 72, 80, 230, 235  
         music, 49, 69, 117, 145  
         wide spaces, 49, 92  
         women, 9, 49, 72, 74, 77  
             (*and see* Louise de la Valliere)  
     Versailles, 17, 35, 49, 72  
     Daily work, 44, 58, 62, 77  
     " Heroic health," 49  
     Hunting, 49, 103  
     Italian blood, 49, 136  
     As king and patriot, 18, 43, 61, 80, 230, 235  
     His position in history, 44, 45, 48, 49, 61, 151, 152  
     Adds prestige to monarchy, 44, 45, 48, 61, 151, 152  
     His religion, 75, 138  
     Death, 61, 154, 230  
     In portraiture—  
         Paintings—  
             Blanchard, 33  
             Halle, 31  
             Lebrun, 45-48  
             Mignard, 21, 55  
             Rigaud, 29  
             Van der Meulen, 221, 223  
             Vouet, 30  
     Statuary—  
         Bernini, 28, 104  
         Cartellier, 4, 5  
         Coustou, 20  
         Coyssevox, 38, 56  
         Warin, 27

Louis XIV—  
 Tapestries, 34, 83, 84, 85, 86  
 Wax, 30, 60  
 Bronze, 154  
 Style of, 26, 41, 59, 71, 81, 138, 153, 157  
 Louis XV, 13, 51, 60–62, 63–64, 100, 146, 149–164, 168, 170, 172, 174, 175–176, 183, 189–193  
 Louis XVI, 89, 131, 156, 157, 160, 166, 176, 181, 183, 187, 195, 203, 204, 207, 210  
 Louis XVIII (Comte de Provence), 198, 212  
 Louis Philippe, 3, 75, 127, 147, 183, 213, 214, 215, 216, 231, 232, 235  
 Louise de la Valliere, 9, 77, 78, 98, 115, 129  
 Louvois, 42, 105  
 Lulli, 69, 76, 132, 138  
  
 Mademoiselle, La Grande, 25  
 (see Grande)  
 Maintenon, Madame de, 13, 20, 74–80, 61, 108, 138  
 Mansart, Francois, 7, 65  
 „ Jules Hardouin-, 15, 36, 39, 51, 65–71, 80, 101, 106, 129, 135, 179  
 Marie Antoinette, 14, 23, 62, 66, 86, 130–131, 156, 177, 183–188, 193–196, 198–211  
 Marie Josephe, 161, 163, 173, 174  
 Marie Leszinska, 52, 161, 171, 172, 173  
 Marie-Louise, 147  
 Marie-Theresa, Empress of Austria, 163, 178, 194, 202  
 Marie Thérèse, 7, 29, 55  
 Mars, Salon de, 29–33  
 „ Vase de, 112  
 Marsy, 12, 27, 30, 98, 100, 110  
 Mazarin, 7, 23, 24, 37, 49  
 Menagerie, 117, 118, 149  
 Mercure, Salon de, 33–35  
 Mercy d'Argenseau, 194, 202  
 Méridienne, 186  
 Mignard, 21, 39, 42, 79, 165, 169  
 Mique, Richard, 86, 198, 206  
 Mirabeau, 87, 225  
 Miroir, Bassin du, 127  
 Molière, 10, 25, 58, 114, 115, 132  
 “ Monsieur,” 31, 32, 55  
 Montespan, Madame de, 25, 32, 65, 74, 77, 165  
 Morot, 224  
 Mozart, 166  
 Musée Historique, Chronological guide to, 216  
 Musique, Salon de (or Salon de Madame Adelaide), 165  
 „ „ „ Salon de (Trianon), 140  
 Musset, Alfred de, 103  
  
 Napoleon, 130, 147, 212, 216, 217, 224, 225, 226, 227–230  
 Napoleon III, 147, 223, 233  
 Nattier, 153, 154, 173–175  
 Neptune, Bassin de, 100, 152, 199, 225  
 Nimeguen, Peace of, 3, 95  
 Nouvelle Héloïse, 197  
 Nymphes, Fontaine des, 145  
  
 Œil-de-Bœuf, 54–57, 184  
 Opera, 181–184  
 Orangerie, 105, 141  
  
 Paix, Salon de la, 52  
 „ Vase de la, 95  
 Pajou, 181, 182, 186, 193  
 “ Palatine La,” 31, 78  
 Parterre d'Eau, 17, 95, 102, 110  
 „ de Latone, 110  
 „ du Midi, 86, 93, 103  
 „ du Nord, 101  
 Pavilion, Dufour, 3, 212  
 „ Gabriel, 3, 179, 180  
 Pavillon, Français (de Conversation), 146, 189  
 „ de Musique (Belvedere), 200  
 Peace Treaty of 1919, 51–52  
 Pendule, Salon de la, 161–163  
 Peristyle, 135

<p>Perrault, Charles, 7, 179      Perrault, Claude, 99, 111      Persia, 51      Perspective, Grande, 93, 118, 223      Peter the Great, 38, 146, 149      Petit Lac, 199, 200      Petite Venise, 116      Place d'Armes, 2, 4, 14      Plaisirs des îles Enchantées, 10, 115      Polignac, Duchesse de, 195      Pompadour, Madame de, 161-163, 176, 178, 179, 190      Pope, 120      Porcelaines, Salon des, 167      Potager, 104      Poussin, 19, 37, 81      Princes, Aile des (Aile du Midi), 15, 184          " Cour des, 93, 181          " Escalier des, 226          " Salle des (Trianon), 140      Proserpine, Enlèvement de, 32, 129      Pudique, Venus, 101      Pujet, 112, 176      Pyramide, Fontaine de la, 99</p> <p>Queen Victoria, 51, 213, 233      Quinault, 132      Quintinie, La, 104</p> <p>Racine, 17, 20, 75, 79, 183      Regent, 171, 174      Reichshoffen, Bataille de, 224, 227, 234      " Remouleur" (Knife-grinder), 101      Richard, Claude, 146          " Antoine, 147, 189, 190, 198, 201      Richelieu, Cardinal de, 6, 53, 214, 221          Duc de, 64      Rigaud, 29, 34, 78, 149, 172      Rivers of France, 96, 97, 234      Robert, Hubert, 125, 176, 197, 198      Rodin, 114</p>	<p>Rohan, Cardinal de, 64, 127      Rond Vert, Bosquet du, 124      Ruelle, 59, 84</p> <p>St. Cyr, École de, 69, 75, 146, 150, 218      St. Germain, 5, 8, 39, 92      Saint-Simon, Duc de, 13, 30, 45, 57, 96, 107      Sala degli Specchi, 39      Salle de 1830, 227          " de 1792, 226          " des Sources, 142      Salon de la Reine (des Nobles), 85      Satory, 11, 17, 103, 218      Scheffer, Ary, 222, 227      Scudery, Madeleine de, 9, 25      Senat (see Opera)      Sévigné, Madame de, 25, 32, 59      Sphinxes, 103      Sylvestre, Israel, 114</p> <p>Tapestries, 33-35, 83, 84, 138      (and see Gobelins)      Tapis Vert (Allée Royale), 112, 113      Temple de l'Amour, 199      Théâtre de Marie Antoinette, 205-207      Trianon, Grand (de Marbre), 134-147          " Petit, 189-211          " de Porcelaine, 134      Trompe-Œil, 27, 73      Tuby, 95, 110, 114, 129      Turenne, 25, 77</p> <p>Valmy, Salle de, 164, 226      Van Blarenberghe, 223, 226      Van Cleve, 56, 70      Van Loo, 172, 175      Van der Meulen, 24, 33, 34, 222, 223, 226      Vase de la Guerre, 95          " de la Paix, 95          " du Soleil, 109      Vases of Versailles, 112, 113, 114      Vassé, 21, 42, 45, 157      Vaudreuil, 206</p>
--	---

Vaux-le-Vicomte, 7, 78, 108 (*and see* Fouquet)  
Venice, 50, 116  
Venise, Petite, 116  
Venus, Salon de, 24, 27-28  
Venus Pudique, 101  
Verberckt (*see* Carvings)  
Vernet, Carle, 228  
" Horace, 227, 231  
Versailles, Palace of—  
As democratic institution, 39, 58, 83, 131  
Celebrates unity of France, 97  
Its classic style, 15 (*see* Style of Louis XIV. *Also* Classic Influence)  
Its place in—  
architecture, 9  
national art, 18, 19, 35, 126  
Unity of its art, 17, 26, 39, 42, 81-82, 106, 119, 122, 126, 138

Versailles—  
As school of patriotism, 215  
Its mission, 26, 95, 96, 132, 138  
The town, 217  
Treaty of—  
(1783), 166  
(1919), 51-52  
Victoria, Queen, 51, 143, 146, 213  
Voltaire, 45, 48, 151, 162 179

Walpole, Horace, 110, 120, 181, 186, 197  
War, of 1870, 51, 233, 234, 235  
Wren, Christopher, 7, 9, 50, 65

Young, Arthur, 198, 204, 207  
Yvon, 232

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